TOTAL
ECLIPSE
BOOK THREE
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TACHYON
AFTERACE

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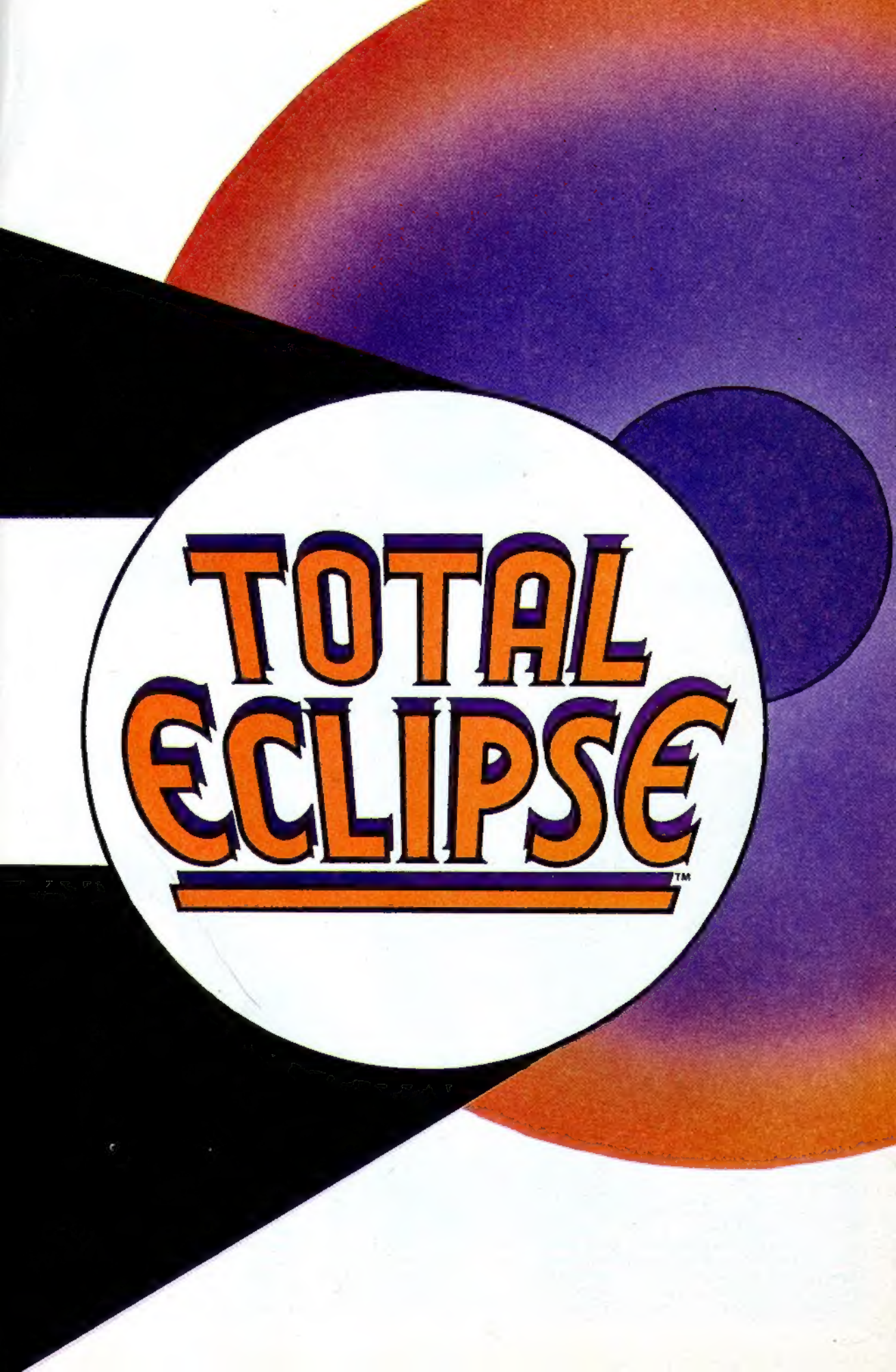
TOTAL
ECLIPSE
™

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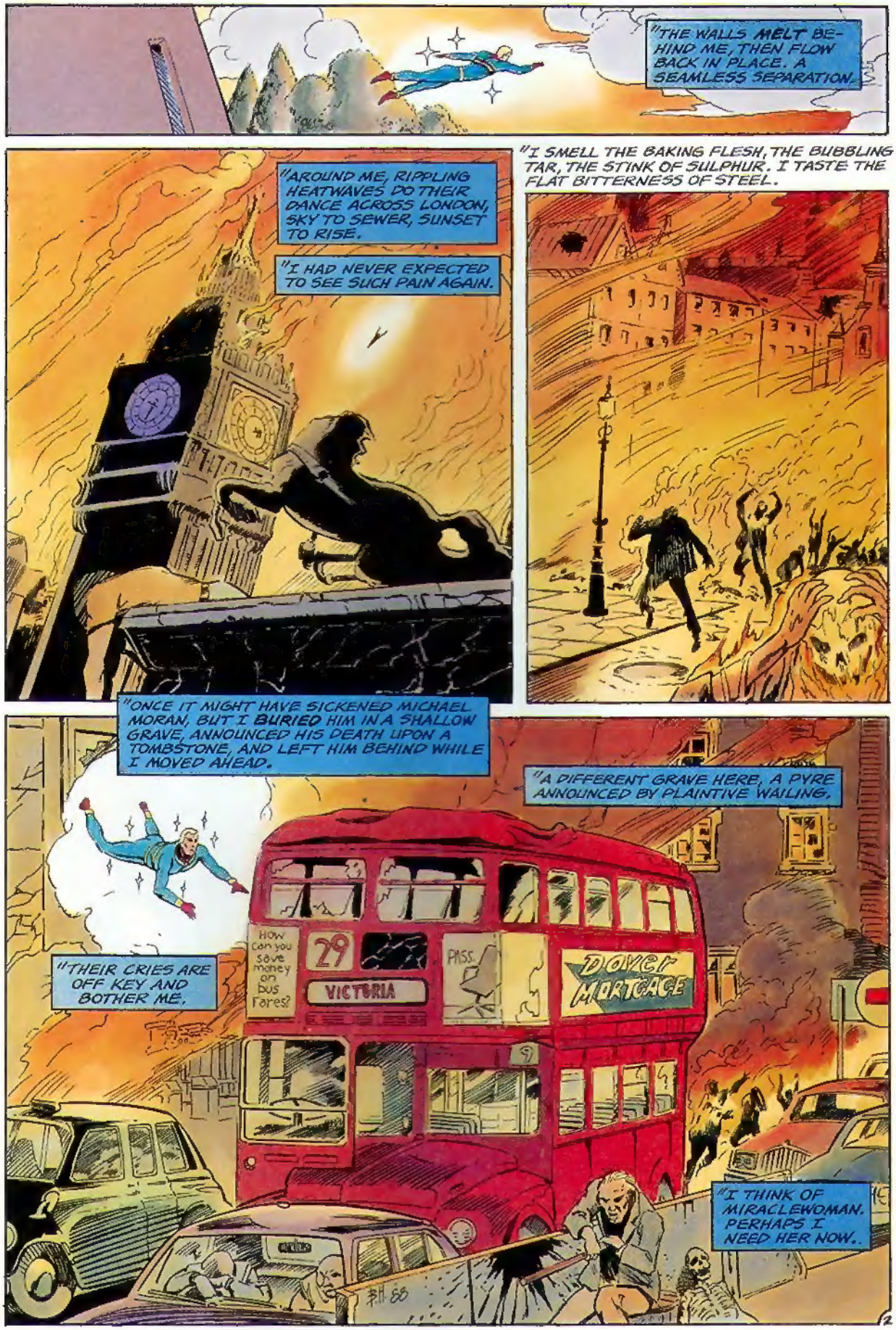
HEROES AND VILLAINS
"TO BE WITHIN A SUN AMIDST MOLTEN GLASS AND STEEL, FLUIDS FLOWING, BUBBLING, DANCING, ANOMALISTIC ACCEPTANCE.
"PERHAPS I SHOULD INVESTIGATE.
"MIRACLEMAN FIDDLES WHILE OLYMPUS BURNS.
"I DECIDE.

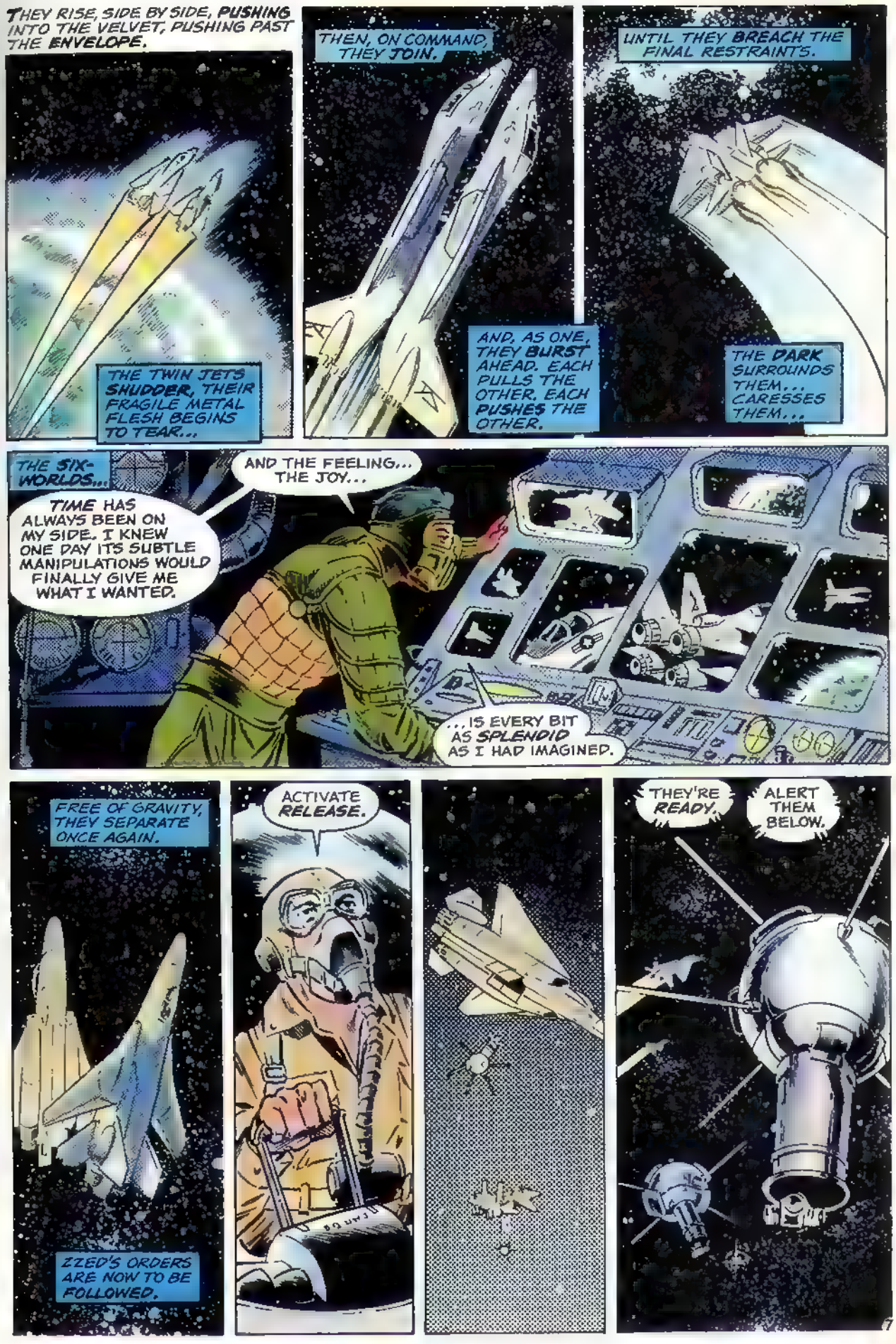

"THE WALLS MELT BEHIND ME, THEN FLOW BACK IN PLACE. A SEAMLESS SEPARATION.
"AROUND ME, RIPPLING HEATWAVES DO THEIR DANCE ACROSS LONDON, SKY TO SEWER, SUNSET TO RISE.
"I HAD NEVER EXPECTED TO SEE SUCH PAIN AGAIN.
"I SMELL THE BAKING FLESH, THE BUBBLING TAR, THE STINK OF SULPHUR. I TASTE THE FLAT BITTERNESS OF STEEL.
"ONCE IT MIGHT HAVE SICKENED MICHAEL MORAN, BUT I BURIED HIM IN A SHALLOW GRAVE, ANNOUNCED HIS DEATH UPON A TOMBSTONE, AND LEFT HIM BEHIND WHILE I MOVED AHEAD.
"A DIFFERENT GRAVE HERE, A PYRE ANNOUNCED BY PLAINTIVE WAILING.
"THEIR CRIES ARE OFF KEY AND BOTHER ME.
How can you save money on bus fares?
29
VICTORIA
PASS
DOYLE MORTGAGE
"I THINK OF MIRACLEWOMAN. PERHAPS I NEED HER NOW.

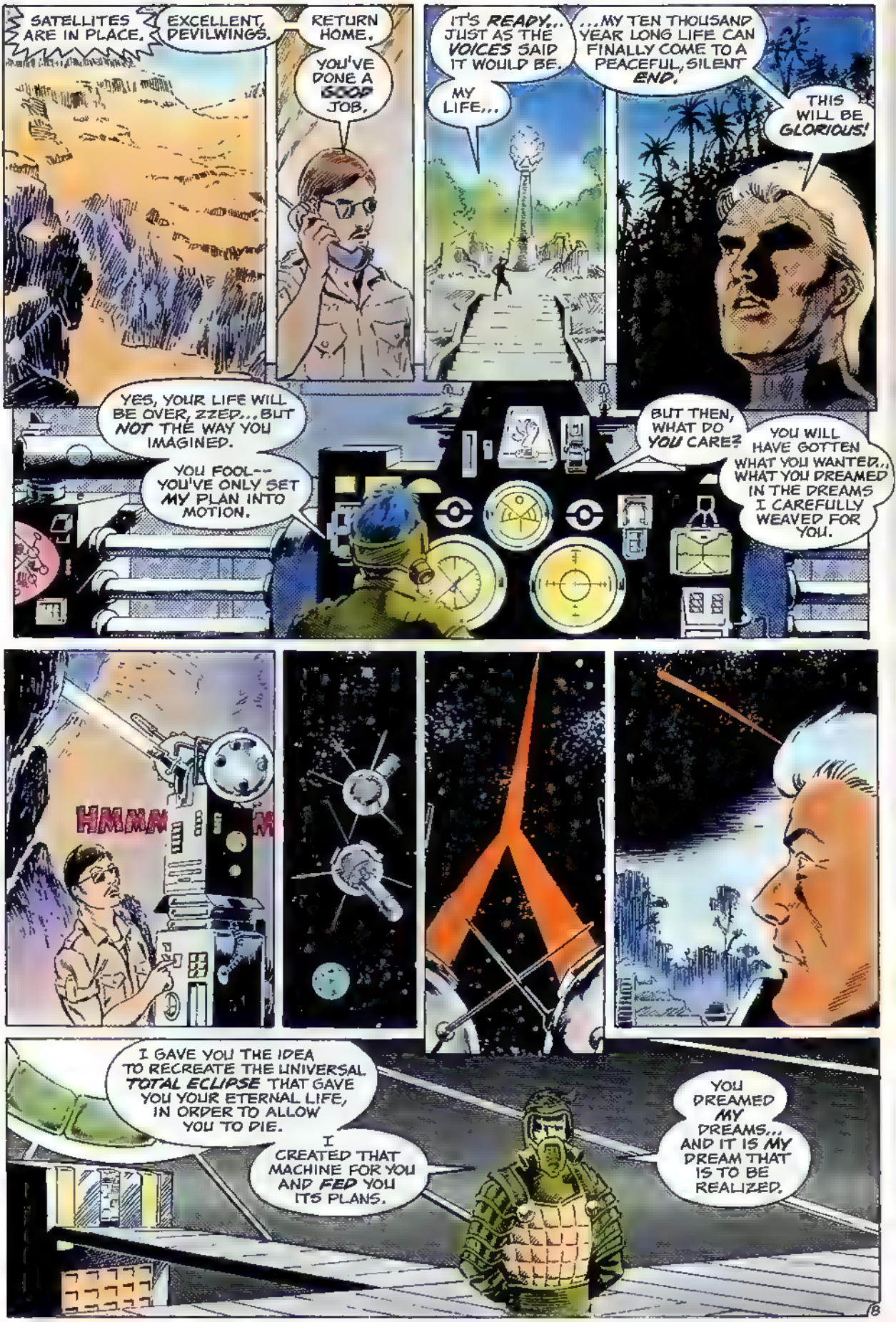
"THEN I THINK OF LIZ AND REMEMBER HER LEAVING. SHE CALLED ME A HIGHER SPECIES.
"I ASSUME I AM.
"I REMEMBER WINTER FLYING OFF TO QYS AND THINK OF HER AS LIZ MUST THINK OF ME.
"THERE WILL BE OTHERS WHO LOOK DOWN UPON WINTER, AND ANOTHER WHO LOOKS DOWN UPON THEM IN TURN.
"IDLE SPECULATION, LITTLE ELSE.
"LONDON IS DIFFERENT. I WONDER ABOUT THE CAUSE.
"FIREDRAKE? THIS IS CERTAINLY WITHIN HIS PROVINCE. SOMEHOW I DOUBT HIS INVOLVEMENT.
"THE WARP-SMITHS? WHY? NO. NOT THEM. NO REASON.
"NO LONGER IS THIS ANOMALISTIC ACCEPTANCE.
"I FIND MYSELF PUZZLED.
"A STATE NOT EXACTLY NEW TO ME.

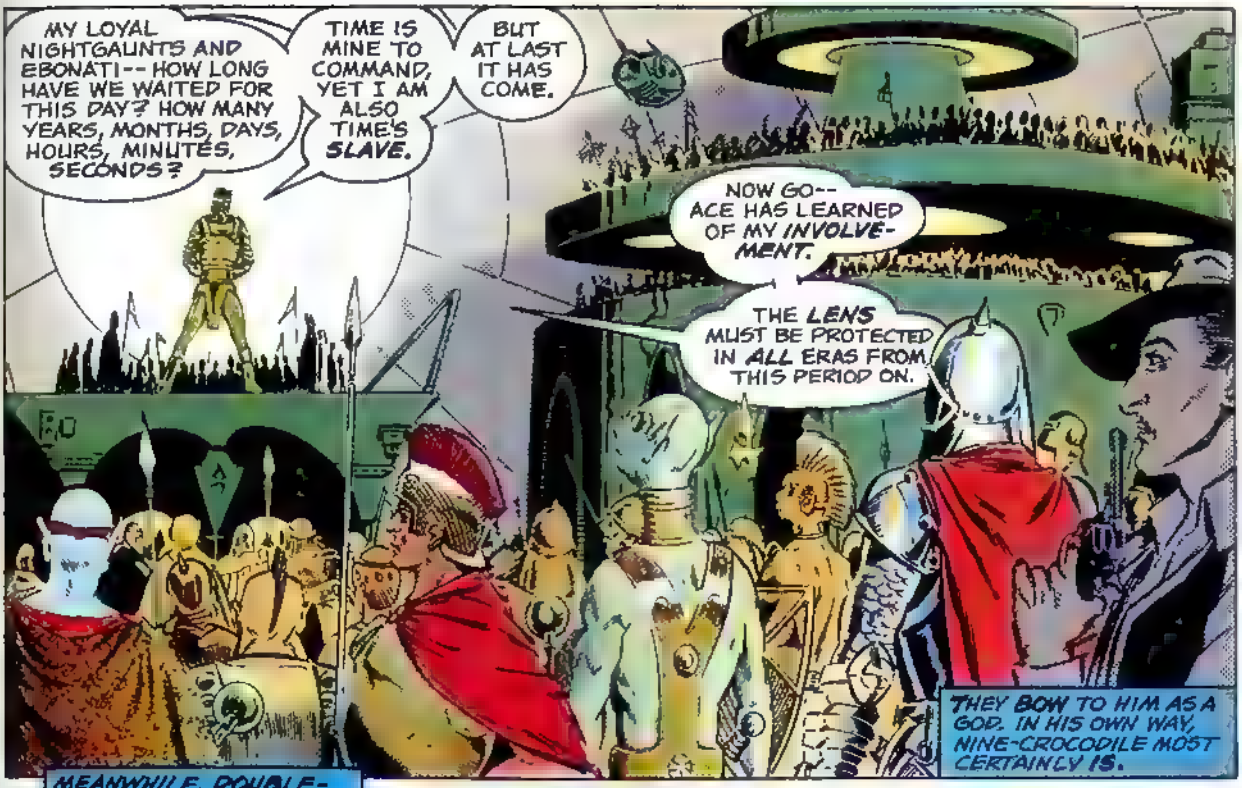
"I HEAR THE CRIES AND TURN. BEHIND ME ARE THE MELTED REMAINS OF TWENTY OR MORE. I COUNT THEIR ARMS AND LEGS AS THEY MOVE TOWARD ME, THEIR VOICES SHRILL.
"THE FLESH MELTS OVER THEM, OBSCURING THEM, REMOVING THEIR INDIVIDUALITY. NO LONGER TWENTY, NOW ONE. NO LONGER UNIQUE -- NOW SOME CREATURE WITH SMOOTHED FLESH UPON THE SCABS.
"IT SWIMS FORWARD IN ITS OWN BLOOD, A MELTING POT.
"I WONDER WHAT IT IS HERE FOR.

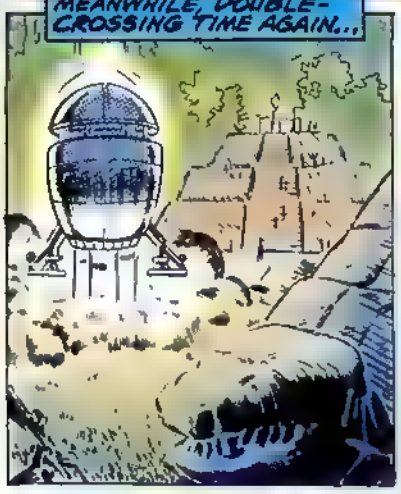
"IT WANTS ME.
"BUT I DO NOT WISH TO PLAY ITS GAME.
FLIK!

SKUTCHH!
TIM McLEOD'S EMPORIUM
I AM PERPLEXED. NOTHING SEEMS TO HAVE CAUSED THE FIRES. NOTHING SEEMS RESPONSIBLE.
NOTHING TO STOP. NOTHING TO FIGHT. NOTHING TO DO.
I SAW.
YOU KNOW IT DOESN'T AFFECT US. THERE ARE PLEASURABLE WAYS TO IGNORE IT.
NO
I DON'T THINK SO.
AT LEAST NOT RIGHT NOW.

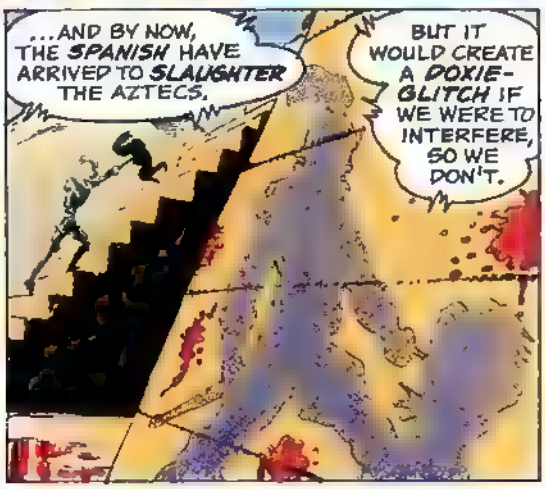

THEY RISE, SIDE BY SIDE, PUSHING INTO THE VELVET, PUSHING PAST THE ENVELOPE.
THE TWIN JETS SHUDDER, THEIR FRAGILE METAL FLESH BEGINS TO TEAR...
THEN, ON COMMAND, THEY JOIN.
AND, AS ONE, THEY BURST AHEAD. EACH PULLS THE OTHER, EACH PUSHES THE OTHER.
UNTIL THEY BREACH THE FINAL RESTRAINTS.
THE DARK SURROUNDS THEM... CARESSES THEM...
THE SIX-WORLDS...
TIME HAS ALWAYS BEEN ON MY SIDE. I KNEW ONE DAY ITS SUBTLE MANIPULATIONS WOULD FINALLY GIVE ME WHAT I WANTED.
AND THE FEELING... THE JOY...
...IS EVERY BIT AS SPLENDID AS I HAD IMAGINED.
FREE OF GRAVITY, THEY SEPARATE ONCE AGAIN.
IZZED'S ORDERS ARE NOW TO BE FOLLOWED.
ACTIVATE RELEASE.
THEY'RE READY.
ALERT THEM BELOW.


SATELLITES ARE IN PLACE.
EXCELLENT, DEVILWINGS.
RETURN HOME.
YOU'VE DONE A SCOOP JOB.
IT'S READY... JUST AS THE VOICES SAID IT WOULD BE.
MY LIFE...
...MY TEN THOUSAND YEAR LONG LIFE CAN FINALLY COME TO A PEACEFUL, SILENT END.
THIS WILL BE GLORIOUS!
YES, YOUR LIFE WILL BE OVER, ZZED... BUT NOT THE WAY YOU IMAGINED.
YOU FOOL-- YOU'VE ONLY SET MY PLAN INTO MOTION.
BUT THEN, WHAT DO YOU CARE?
YOU WILL HAVE GOTTEN WHAT YOU WANTED... WHAT YOU DREAMED IN THE DREAMS I CAREFULLY WEAVED FOR YOU.
HMMM
I GAVE YOU THE IDEA TO RECREATE THE UNIVERSAL TOTAL ECLIPSE THAT GAVE YOU YOUR ETERNAL LIFE, IN ORDER TO ALLOW YOU TO DIE.
I CREATED THAT MACHINE FOR YOU AND FED YOU ITS PLANS.
YOU DREAMED MY DREAMS... AND IT IS MY DREAM THAT IS TO BE REALIZED.


MY LOYAL NIGHTGAUNTS AND EBONATI-- HOW LONG HAVE WE WAITED FOR THIS DAY? HOW MANY YEARS, MONTHS, DAYS, HOURS, MINUTES, SECONDS?
TIME IS MINE TO COMMAND, YET I AM ALSO TIME'S SLAVE.
BUT AT LAST IT HAS COME.
NOW GO-- ACE HAS LEARNED OF MY INVOLVEMENT.
THE LENS MUST BE PROTECTED IN ALL ERAS FROM THIS PERIOD ON.
THEY BOW TO HIM AS A GOD. IN HIS OWN WAY, NINE-CROCODILE MOST CERTAINLY IS.

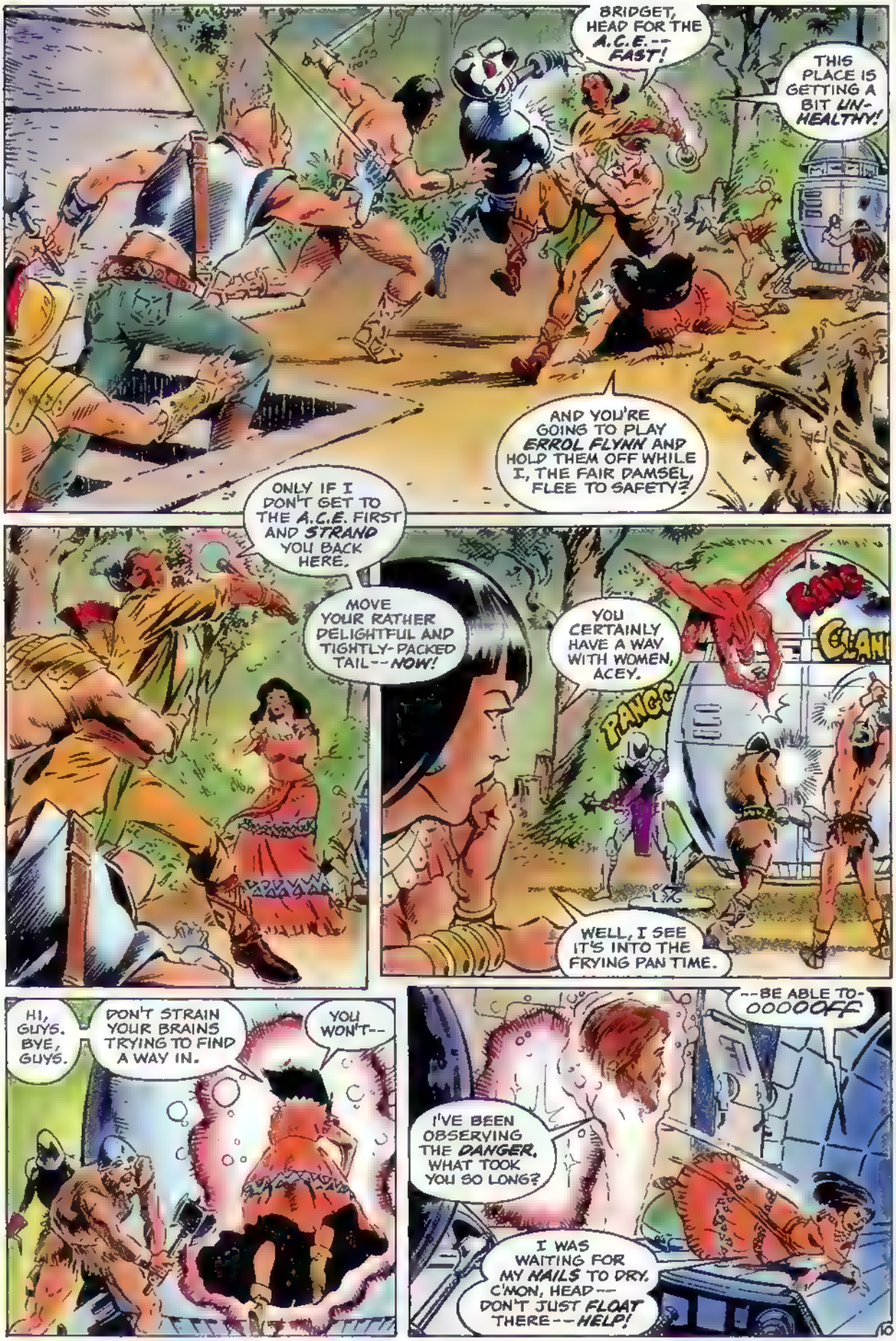

MEANWHILE, DOUBLE-CROSSING TIME AGAIN...

ACEY-DEUCE...
I KNOW, BRIDGET--THE LENS IS IN THIS TIME PERIOD, TOO.

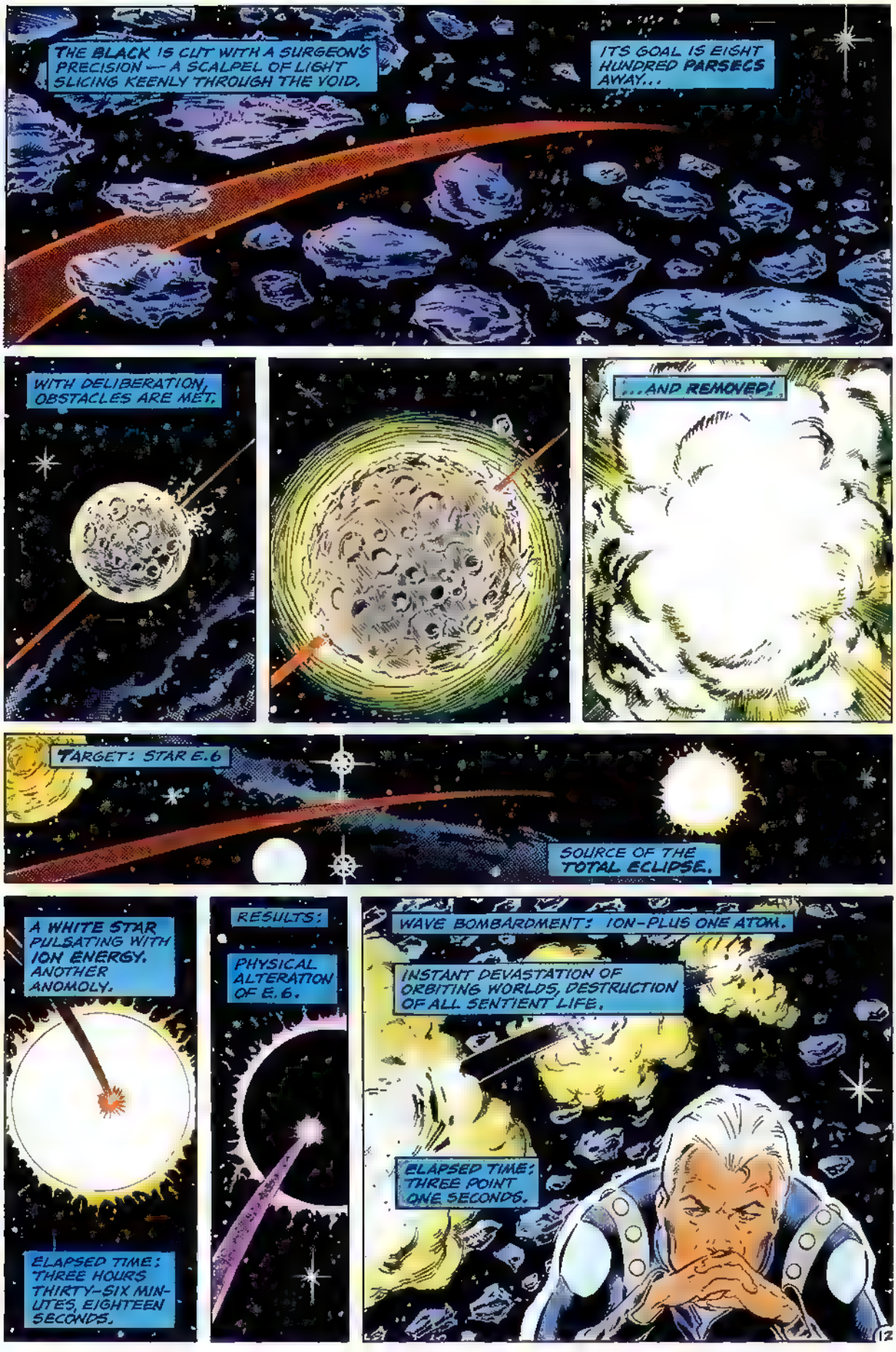

...AND BY NOW, THE SPANISH HAVE ARRIVED TO SLAUGHTER THE AZTECS.
BUT IT WOULD CREATE A DOXIE-GLITCH IF WE WERE TO INTERFERE, SO WE DON'T.

DAMN, CROC-- WHAT'S HE UP TO NOW?
DON'T WORRY ABOUT CROC, ACEY--

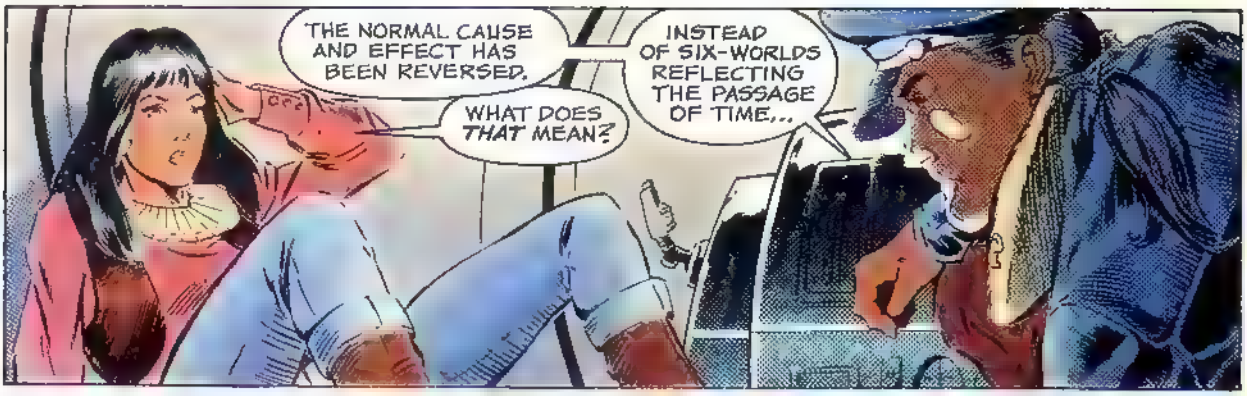
BOIT
BOIT
BOIT
-- I'M SUDDENLY MORE CONCERNED ABOUT HIS FAMILY!
NIGHTGAUNTS AND EBONATI AND BEARS, OH MY!

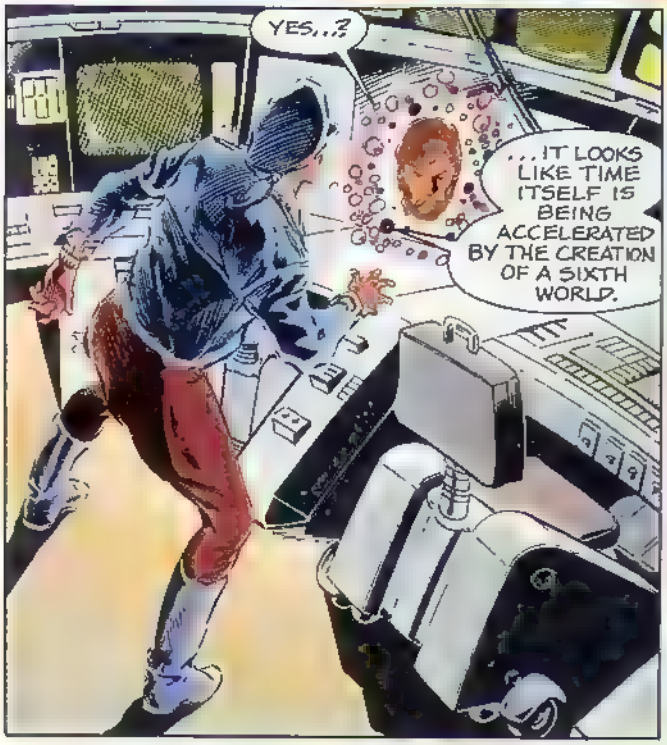

BRIDGET, HEAD FOR THE A.C.E.-- FAST!
THIS PLACE IS GETTING A BIT UN-HEALTHY!
AND YOU'RE GOING TO PLAY ERROL FLYNN AND HOLD THEM OFF WHILE I, THE FAIR DAMSEL, FLEE TO SAFETY?
ONLY IF I DON'T GET TO THE A.C.E. FIRST AND STRAND YOU BACK HERE.
MOVE YOUR RATHER DELIGHTFUL AND TIGHTLY-PACKED TAIL-- NOW!
YOU CERTAINLY HAVE A WAY WITH WOMEN, ACEY.
KING
CLANG
PANG
WELL, I SEE IT'S INTO THE FRYING PAN TIME.
HI, GUYS. BYE, GUYS.
DON'T STRAIN YOUR BRAINS TRYING TO FIND A WAY IN.
YOU WON'T--
--BE ABLE TO- OOOOOFF
I'VE BEEN OBSERVING THE DANGER. WHAT TOOK YOU SO LONG?
I WAS WAITING FOR MY NAILS TO DRY. C'MON, HEAD-- DON'T JUST FLOAT THERE-- HELP!

ACEY'S IN DIRE TROUBLE AND HE NEEDS OUR TIMELY AID TO BOTH RESCUE HIM AND SUPPLY THE PROPER THRILLS.
SO WHAT DO WE DO?
I'D SAY WE GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE...
...BEFORE THOSE NITWIT PEABRAINS ACTUALLY CAUSE SOME PERMANENT DAMAGE!
SOUNDS GOOD TO—
BOIT
ACEY--
I WAS WONDERING WHERE YOU TWO TOOK OFF TO.
YOU SHOULD BE GLAD WE CAME BACK AT ALL.
C'MON-- FORGET THEM! GET INSIDE.
YOU SPOIL ALL MY FUN.
I SAVED YOU, ACEY-DEUCE.
I KNOW, DEAR,..AND I HAVE ONLY ONE THING TO SAY...
...YOU WAIT SO LONG THE NEXT TIME AND I'LL DECK YOU ONE.
MMMMM, YOU'RE SO SWEET WHEN YOU'RE NEAN-DERTHAL.


THE BLACK IS CUT WITH A SURGEON'S PRECISION — A SCALPEL OF LIGHT SLICING KEENLY THROUGH THE VOID.
ITS GOAL IS EIGHT HUNDRED PARSECS AWAY...
WITH DELIBERATION, OBSTACLES ARE MET.
...AND REMOVED!
TARGET: STAR E.6
SOURCE OF THE TOTAL ECLIPSE.
A WHITE STAR PULSATING WITH ION ENERGY. ANOTHER ANOMOLY.
ELAPSED TIME: THREE HOURS THIRTY-SIX MINUTES, EIGHTEEN SECONDS.
RESULTS:
PHYSICAL ALTERATION OF E.6.
WAVE BOMBARDMENT: ION-PLUS ONE ATOM.
INSTANT DEVASTATION OF ORBITING WORLDS, DESTRUCTION OF ALL SENTIENT LIFE.
ELAPSED TIME: THREE POINT ONE SECONDS.
12

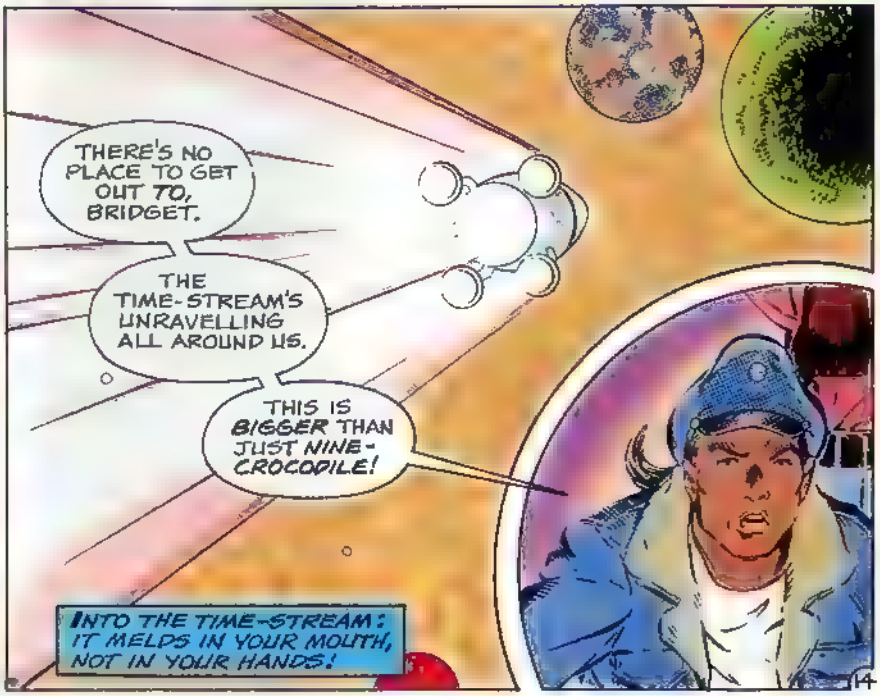
SO, WHAT NOW, ACEY?
WE GO OVER WHAT WE KNOW.
OH, GOOD-- I JUST LOVE REHASHING THE PAST.
IT'S CALLED PLANNING. KNOW WHAT YOU'RE UP AGAINST AND YOU CAN DEDUCE HOW TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM.
UP AND AT 'EM, SHERLOCK.
NINE-CROC'S BEHIND WHATEVER'S HAPPENING. POXIE-GLITCHES ARE APPEARING EVERYWHERE.
ACEY-- JUST WHAT IS HAPPENING?
THE A.C.E.'S NOT RESPONDING.
SOMETHING'S WRONG.
HEAD, WHERE THE HELL ARE YOU?
I'M DOING TIME-CHECKS.
NINE-CROC'S SIXTH WORLD IS BEING CREATED LONG BEFORE IT'S SUPPOSED TO... TIME MAY BE SPEEDING UP...


THE NORMAL CAUSE AND EFFECT HAS BEEN REVERSED.
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?
INSTEAD OF SIX-WORLDS REFLECTING THE PASSAGE OF TIME...

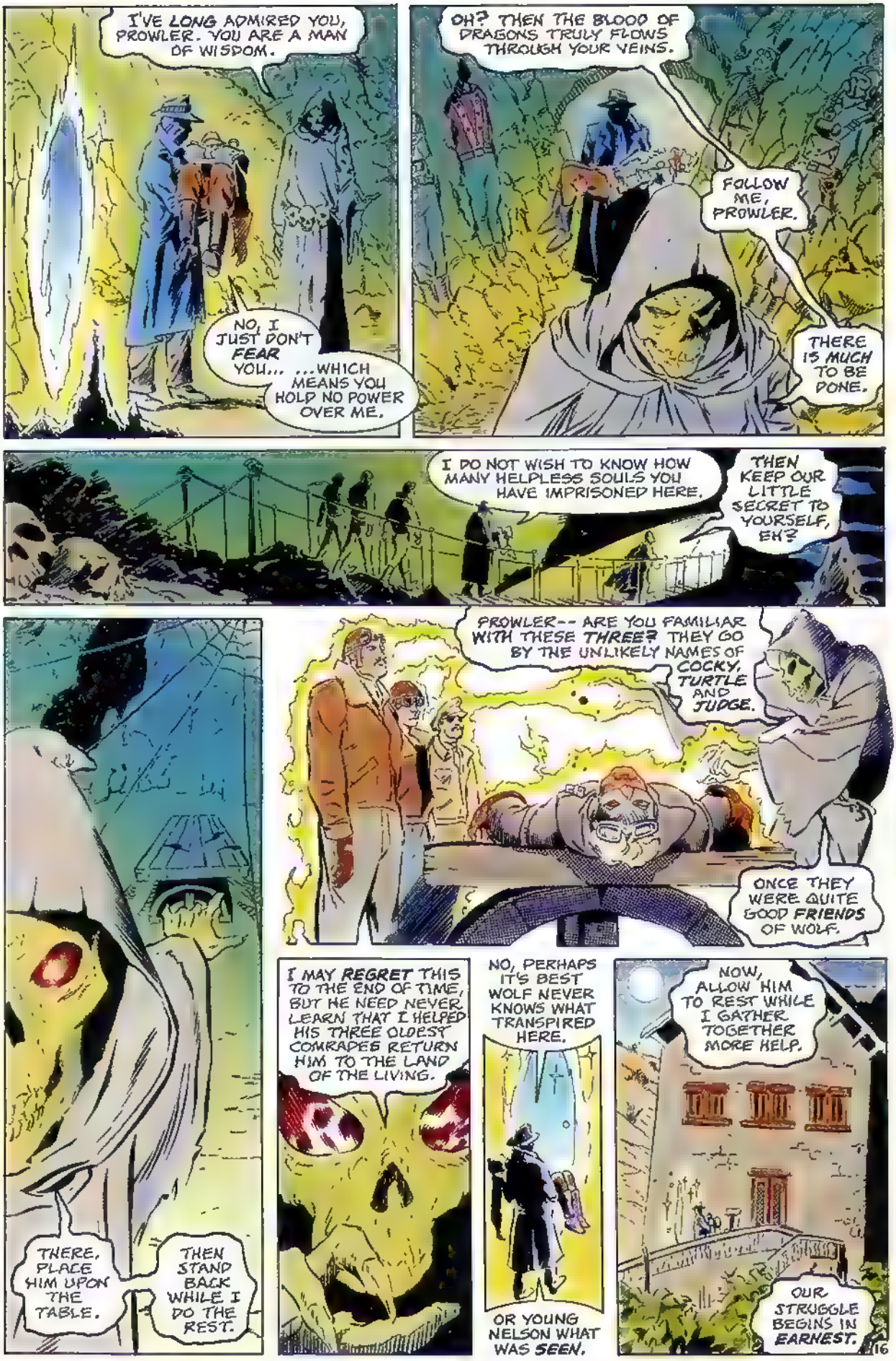

YES...?
...IT LOOKS LIKE TIME ITSELF IS BEING ACCELERATED BY THE CREATION OF A SIXTH WORLD.

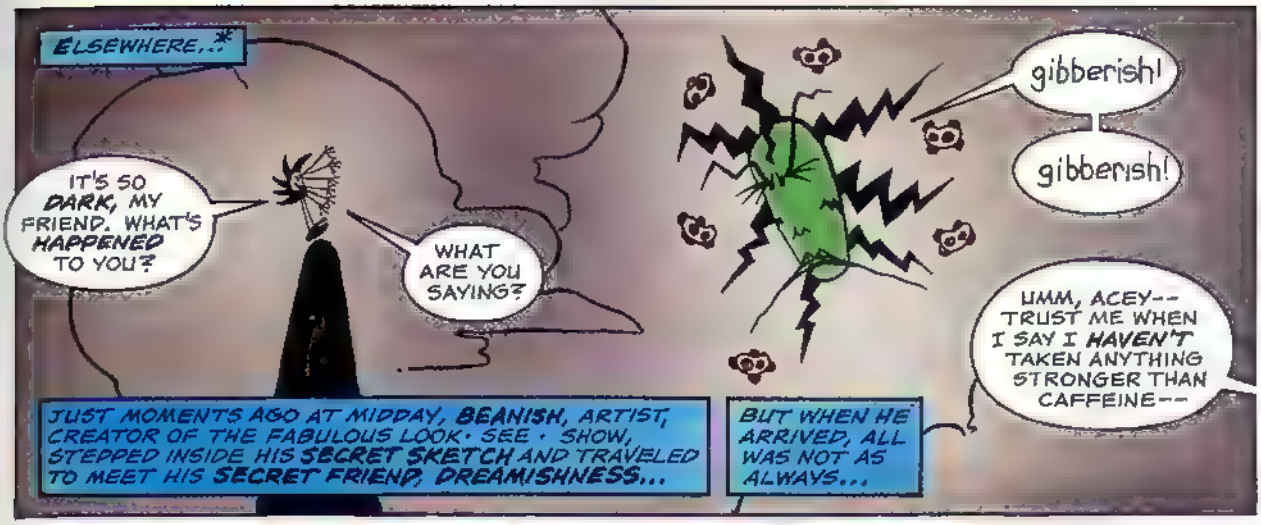
MAYBE TIME IS MAKING A LAST-DITCH EFFORT TO KEEP ITSELF IN LINE.
WELL, IT'S NOT DOING A VERY GOOD JOB OF IT.
THEN WE'VE GOT TO HELP.

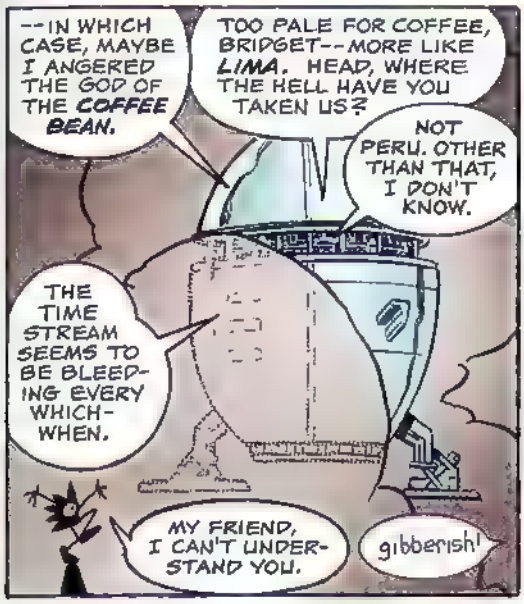
THE NOISE IS DEAFENING.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO GET US OUT OF HERE?

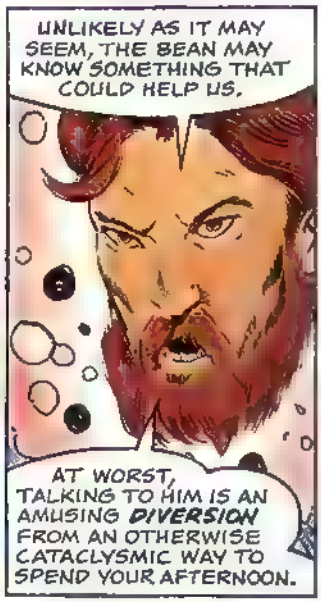

THERE'S NO PLACE TO GET OUT TO, BRIDGET.
THE TIME-STREAM'S UNRAVELLING ALL AROUND US.
THIS IS BIGGER THAN JUST NINE-CROCODILE!
INTO THE TIME-STREAM: IT MELDS IN YOUR MOUTH, NOT IN YOUR HANDS!

SCI-PLEX 3, HIDDEN DEEP WITHIN THE SOUTHERN APPALACHIANS. THIS IS A SCIENTIFIC BASE KNOWN ONLY TO A VERY FEW.
ITS SECURITY HAS RECENTLY BEEN BREACHED...
SKY'S BEEN HURT. WE'VE GOT TO GET HIM HELP.
PERHAPS NOW YOU WILL LISTEN TO ME. WE MUST MAKE A DEAL WITH MISERY.
IT IS TIME YOU BELIEVED ME.
BELIEVE? NEVER! COOPERATE-- MAYBE.
PERHAPS I NEED TO PROVE MY SINCERITY. BRING YOUR FRIEND TO ME...I CAN HELP HIM ABOARD MY AIRTOMB.
LIKE HELL, SKULL-FACE.
SKY'S PASSED OUT... WHAT DO I DO?
YOU ARE ALL NEEDED IN MEXICO. I WILL TEND TO WOLF'S NEEDS.
I CAN'T...
IN THIS STRUGGLE WE ARE ALLIES.
DAMMIT-- I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.
NEIN! NEIN! YOU CAN'T LET HIM GO ABOARD THE AIR TOMB.
I WAS TRAPPED THERE FOR DECADES! I KNOW--
STUPID CHILDREN. GO TO MEXICO.
I WILL STAY WITH HIM.
NOW-- HURRY!

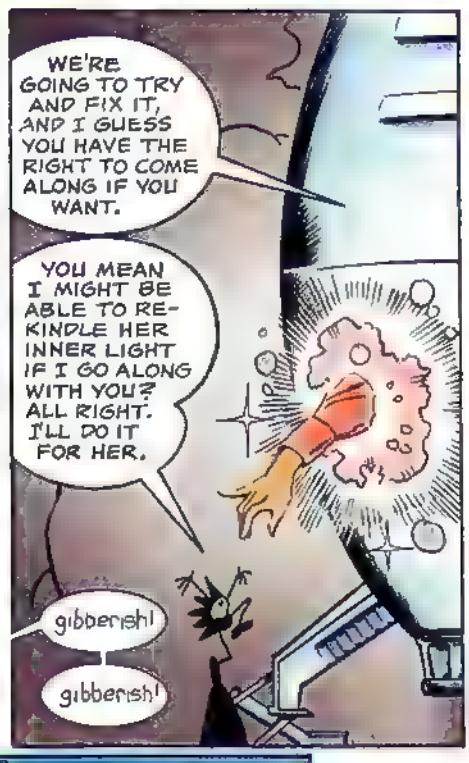

I'VE LONG ADMIRED YOU, PROWLER. YOU ARE A MAN OF WISDOM.
NO, I JUST DON'T FEAR YOU... ...WHICH MEANS YOU HOLD NO POWER OVER ME.
OH? THEN THE BLOOD OF DRAGONS TRULY FLOWS THROUGH YOUR VEINS.
FOLLOW ME, PROWLER.
THERE IS MUCH TO BE DONE.
I DO NOT WISH TO KNOW HOW MANY HELPLESS SOULS YOU HAVE IMPRISONED HERE.
THEN KEEP OUR LITTLE SECRET TO YOURSELF, EH?
PROWLER-- ARE YOU FAMILIAR WITH THESE THREE? THEY GO BY THE UNLIKELY NAMES OF COCKY, TURTLE AND JUDGE.
ONCE THEY WERE QUITE GOOD FRIENDS OF WOLF.
THERE, PLACE HIM UPON THE TABLE.
THEN STAND BACK WHILE I DO THE REST.
I MAY REGRET THIS TO THE END OF TIME, BUT HE NEED NEVER LEARN THAT I HELPED HIS THREE OLDEST COMRADES RETURN HIM TO THE LAND OF THE LIVING.
NO, PERHAPS IT'S BEST WOLF NEVER KNOWS WHAT TRANSPIRED HERE.
OR YOUNG NELSON WHAT WAS SEEN.
NOW, ALLOW HIM TO REST WHILE I GATHER TOGETHER MORE HELP.
OUR STRUGGLE BEGINS IN EARNEST.


ELSEWHERE...*
IT'S SO DARK, MY FRIEND. WHAT'S HAPPENED TO YOU?
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
gibberish!
gibberish!
UMM, ACEY-- TRUST ME WHEN I SAY I HAVEN'T TAKEN ANYTHING STRONGER THAN CAFFEINE--
JUST MOMENTS AGO AT MIDDAY, BEANISH, ARTIST, CREATOR OF THE FABULOUS LOOK · SEE · SHOW, STEPPED INSIDE HIS SECRET SKETCH AND TRAVELED TO MEET HIS SECRET FRIEND, DREAMISHNESS...
BUT WHEN HE ARRIVED, ALL WAS NOT AS ALWAYS...

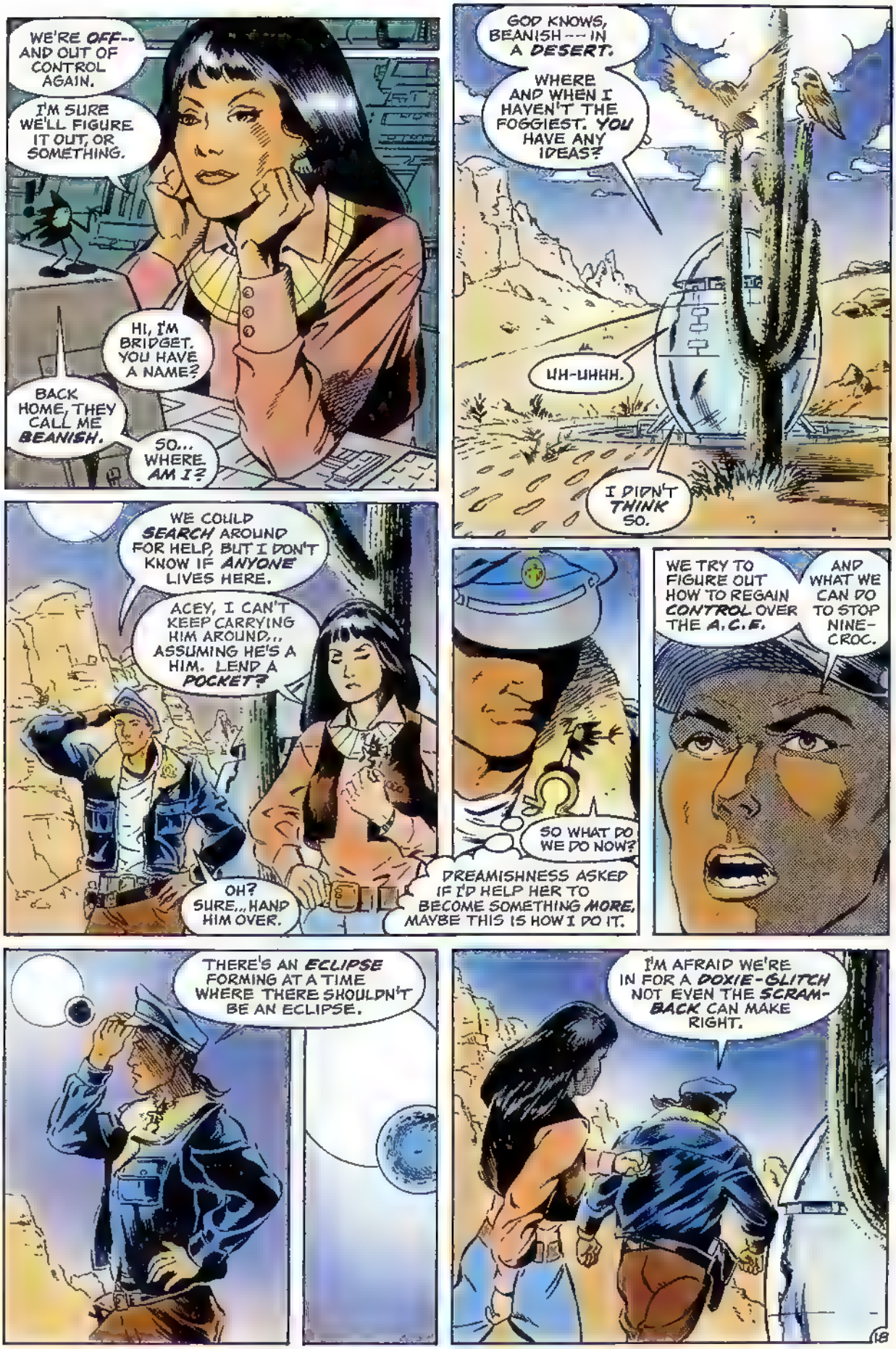

--IN WHICH CASE, MAYBE I ANGERED THE GOD OF THE COFFEE BEAN.
TOO PALE FOR COFFEE, BRIDGET--MORE LIKE LIMA. HEAD, WHERE THE HELL HAVE YOU TAKEN US?
NOT PERU. OTHER THAN THAT, I DON'T KNOW.
THE TIME STREAM SEEMS TO BE BLEEDING EVERY WHICH-WHEN.
MY FRIEND, I CAN'T UNDERSTAND YOU.
gibberish!


UNLIKELY AS IT MAY SEEM, THE BEAN MAY KNOW SOMETHING THAT COULD HELP US.
AT WORST, TALKING TO HIM IS AN AMUSING DIVERSION FROM AN OTHERWISE CATACLYSMIC WAY TO SPEND YOUR AFTERNOON.

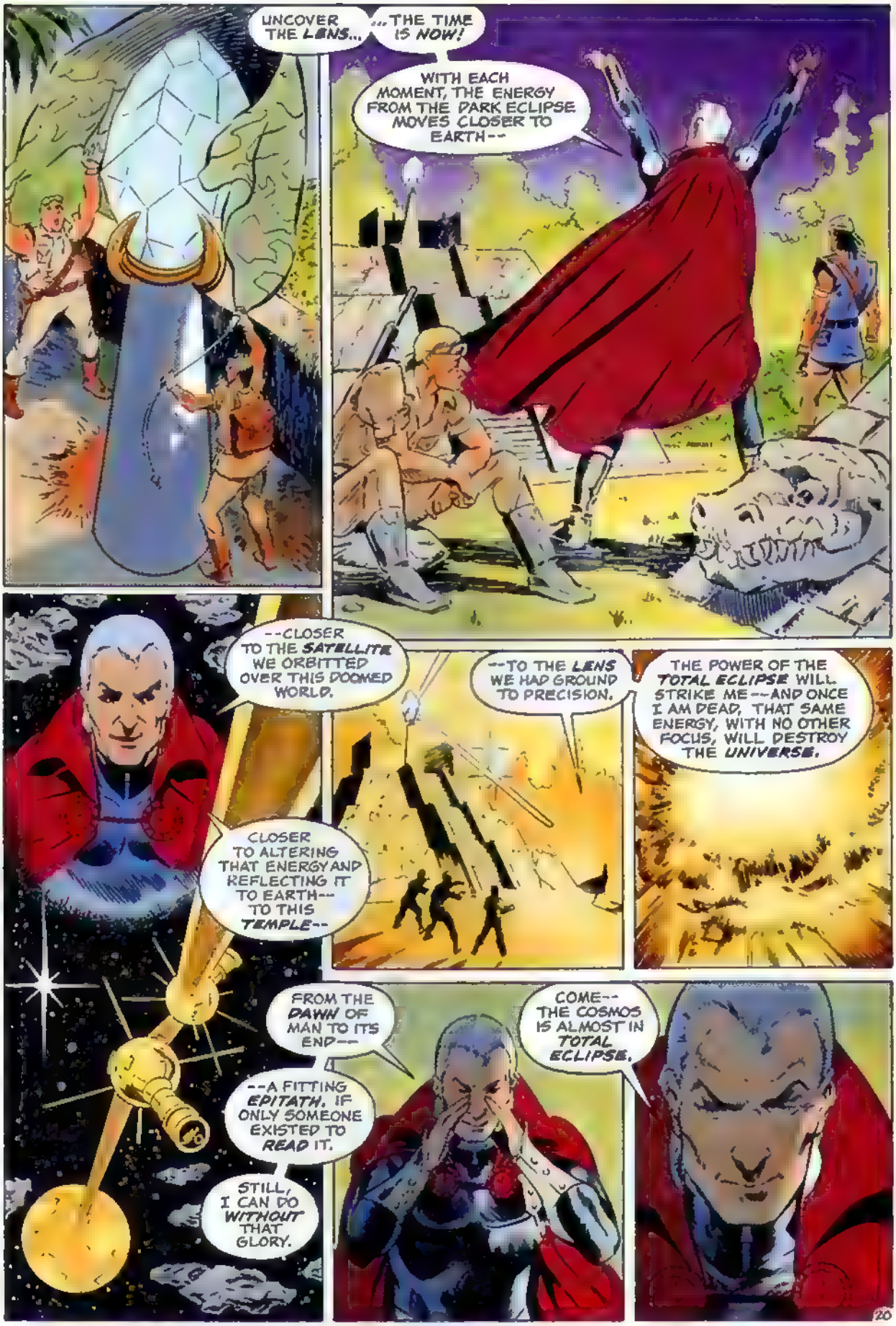
I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON.
WELL, SINCE YOU ARE TALKING, I GUESS YOU ARE REAL.
LOOK, LITTLE GUY, THERE'S BEEN SOME KIND OF COSMIC SCREW-UP...AND I HATE TO TELL YOU THIS, BUT IT MIGHT HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH YOUR FRIEND'S PROBLEM.


WE'RE GOING TO TRY AND FIX IT, AND I GUESS YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO COME ALONG IF YOU WANT.
YOU MEAN I MIGHT BE ABLE TO RE-KINDLE HER INNER LIGHT IF I GO ALONG WITH YOU? ALL RIGHT. I'LL DO IT FOR HER.
gibberish!
gibberish!

*NOTE: SEE TALES OF THE BEANWORLD #10 --FRED


WE'RE OFF-- AND OUT OF CONTROL AGAIN.
I'M SURE WE'LL FIGURE IT OUT, OR SOMETHING.
HI, I'M BRIDGET. YOU HAVE A NAME?
BACK HOME, THEY CALL ME BEANISH.
SO... WHERE AM I?
GOD KNOWS, BEANISH --- IN A DESERT.
WHERE AND WHEN I HAVEN'T THE FOGGIEST. YOU HAVE ANY IDEAS?
UH-UHHH.
I DIDN'T THINK SO.
WE COULD SEARCH AROUND FOR HELP, BUT I DON'T KNOW IF ANYONE LIVES HERE.
ACEY, I CAN'T KEEP CARRYING HIM AROUND... ASSUMING HE'S A HIM. LEND A POCKET?
OH? SURE... HAND HIM OVER.
SO WHAT DO WE DO NOW?
DREAMISHNESS ASKED IF I'D HELP HER TO BECOME SOMETHING MORE. MAYBE THIS IS HOW I DO IT.
WE TRY TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO REGAIN CONTROL OVER THE A.C.E.
AND WHAT WE CAN DO TO STOP NINE-CROC.
THERE'S AN ECLIPSE FORMING AT A TIME WHERE THERE SHOULDN'T BE AN ECLIPSE.
I'M AFRAID WE'RE IN FOR A DOXIE-GLITCH NOT EVEN THE SCRAM-BACK CAN MAKE RIGHT.

CALIFORNIA...
ARE YOU HIROTA? I'VE GOT A PACKAGE FOR YOU. SPECIAL DELIVERY...
WOLF?! HURRY-- BRING HIM INSIDE. HE NEEDS HELP.
H-HE'S NOT THE ONLY ONE.
WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU? WHERE IS DAVY?
THE BOY'S FINE...
WHICH IS A LOT MORE THAN I CAN SAY FOR THE REST OF US...
UNNNNHH...
LATER...
UNNNHH-- FEEL LIKE WORLD WAR II WAS FOUGHT IN MY HEAD!
WE'VE ALL FELT THAT WAY, WOLF.
SO HOW THE HELL DID I GET HERE?
IT'S NOT IMPORTANT, SKYWOLF.
WHAT D'YA MEAN? I REMEMBER--
I SAID IT ISN'T IMPORTANT, SKYWOLF.
OH, YEAH... MEBBE IT AIN'T.
SO WHAT NOW?
WE NEED TO GO TO MEXICO... ARE THERE OTHERS WE CAN RECRUIT TO HELP US?
UMMM, YEAH-- IF LA LUPINA'S STILL CHUGGING ENCHILADAS, WE CAN CALL ON HER.
OTHER THAN THAT THOUGH-- WE'RE ON OUR OWN.
HMMM... I SEE WE HAVE GUESTS.
WHY DID YOU NOT INFORM ME, HIROTA?


UNCOVER THE LENS...
...THE TIME IS NOW!
WITH EACH MOMENT, THE ENERGY FROM THE DARK ECLIPSE MOVES CLOSER TO EARTH--
--CLOSER TO THE SATELLITE WE ORBITTED OVER THIS DOOMED WORLD.
--TO THE LENS WE HAD GROUND TO PRECISION.
THE POWER OF THE TOTAL ECLIPSE WILL STRIKE ME--AND ONCE I AM DEAD, THAT SAME ENERGY, WITH NO OTHER FOCUS, WILL DESTROY THE UNIVERSE.
CLOSER TO ALTERING THAT ENERGY AND REFLECTING IT TO EARTH-- TO THIS TEMPLE--
FROM THE DAWN OF MAN TO ITS END--
--A FITTING EPITATH. IF ONLY SOMEONE EXISTED TO READ IT.
STILL, I CAN DO WITHOUT THAT GLORY.
COME-- THE COSMOS IS ALMOST IN TOTAL ECLIPSE.

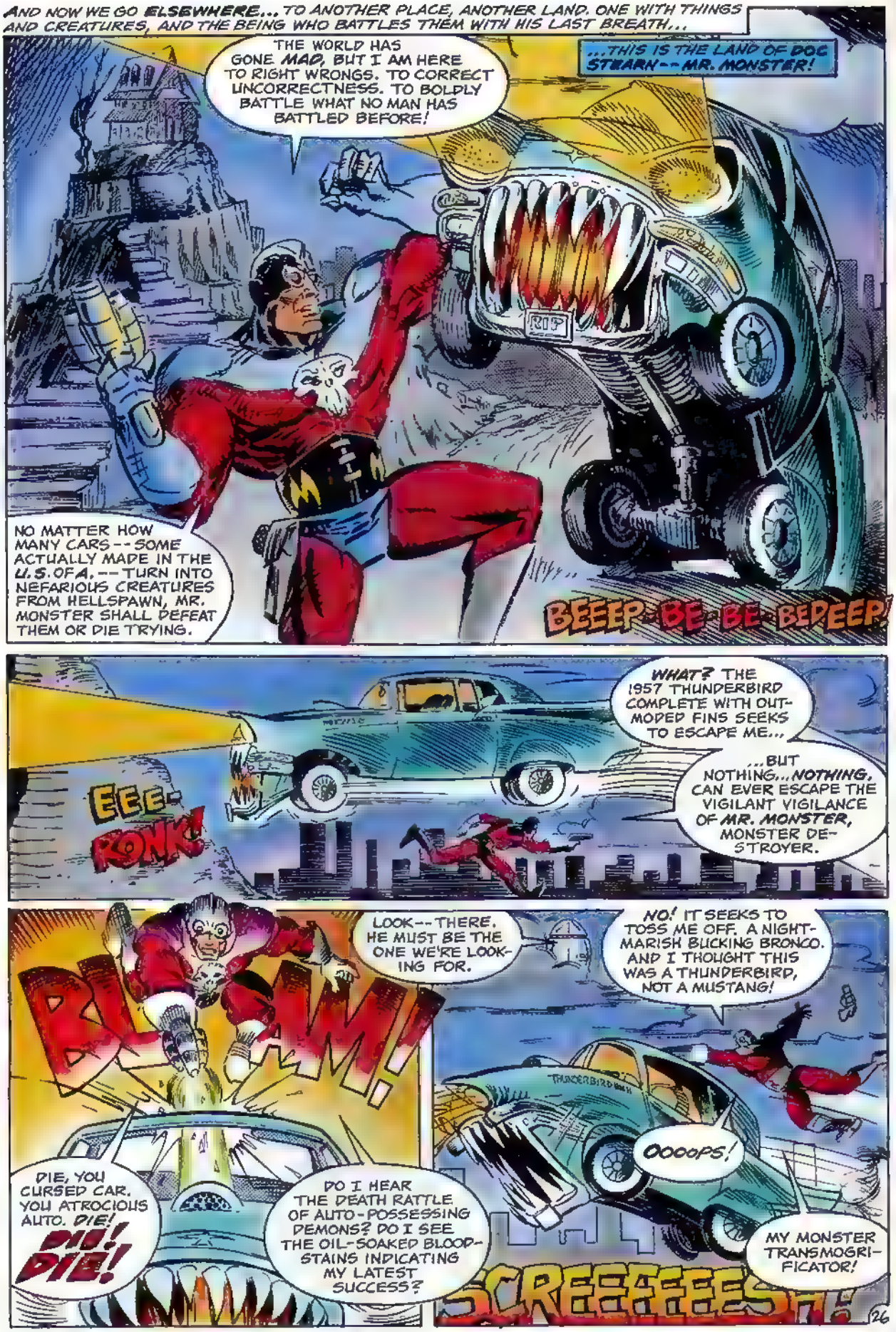
WOMEN
NO! I AIN'T GOIN' NOWHERE!
SPECIALLY NOT INTO THE POWDER ROOM!
C'MON, THE A.C.E. APPEARED IN HERE... HURRY BEFORE THEY COME OUT OF THE STALLS.
BESIDES -- WHO ARE YA, ANYWAY?
AND WHAT THE HELL DO YOU WANT WITH ME?
WE'RE LOOKING FOR FRIENDS TO HELP US --
--AND THE TALKING HEAD THAT BROUGHT US HERE POINTED OUT YOU!
SO PLEASE COME... IT WILL BE AN ADVENTURE!
ELSEWHERE...
"THE SUN IS IN ECLIPSE... BUT NOT WHEN IT IS SUP-POSED TO BE.
"ANOTHER ANOMALY-- --ONE TO...
"I HEAR VOICES BELOW.
"I SENSE SOMEHOW THESE WILL EXPLAIN THE UNFOLDING MYSTERIES."
WHO ARE YOU?
WELL, AT LEAST THIS TIME WE'VE GOT SOMEONE HUMAN.
HELLUVA LOT BETTER THAN TALKING BEANS AND DUCKS.
HE LOOKS LIKE... A GOD.
YOU SAY THAT ABOUT EVERY MAN IN TIGHT PANTS.
21

WHAT DO YOU WANT?
YOU'VE BEEN HAVING DOXY-- PROBLEMS... WE KNOW WHY.
HOLD IT, HOLD IT, HOLD IT! ACEY-- JUST TELL THE MAN WHY WE'RE HERE.
...I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT HAVE CAUSED THOSE--DOXIE-GLITCHES, YOU CALL THEM?
THAT'S NINE-CROC'S JOB. MINE IS TO STOP THEM.
BUT WE CAN'T DO IT ALONE. SO WHAT DO YOU SAY?
WE NEED HELP AND WE CAN HELP YOU.
THIS WORLD IS AFIRE WITHOUT REASON,
THE ECLIPSE THREATENS US ALL WITHOUT RESPITE.
WHAT ELSE CAN I SAY?
IF YOU KNOW HOW TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM--
HOLD IT--I KNOW WHO CAUSED THE PROBLEM, NOTHING ELSE.
BUT UNLESS WE GET AS MUCH HELP AS WE CAN--
I FULLY UNDERSTAND.
VERY WELL...
...LET US GO!
22

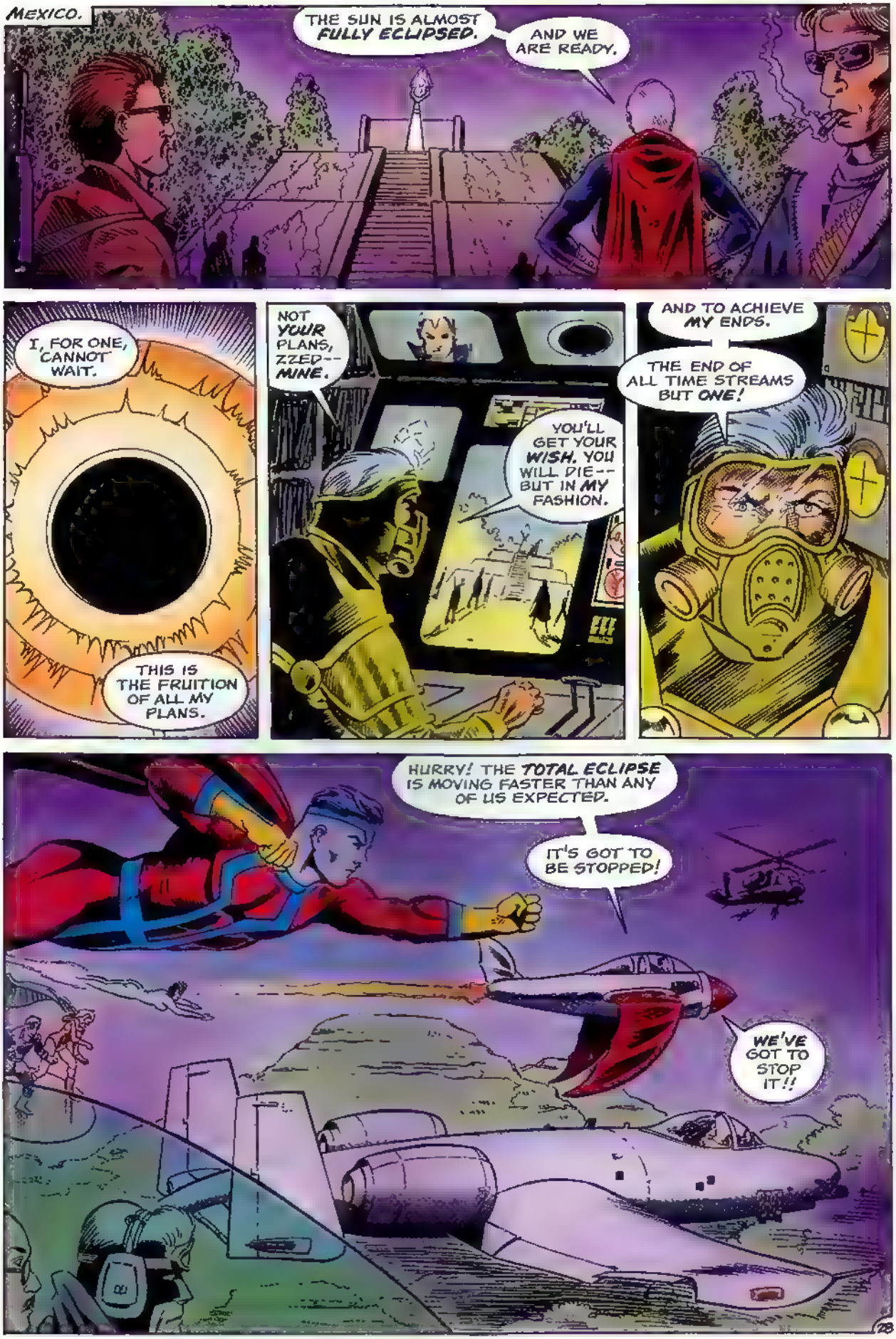
ELSEWHERE...
OKAY, PAL-- REACH INTO THAT DRAWER NICE 'N' EASY--
--AND TAKE OUT ALL THE PAPER... THE ONE WITH THE PRESIDENTS' FACES ON 'EM.
BUT LEAVE THE BOTTOM BILL, EH?
WE WOULDN'T WANT YOU TRIPPING THE SPECIAL BANK ALARM NOW, WOULD WE?
KRASH!
WHAT THE HELL?
WHO THE HELL ARE YOU?
THEY CALL ME THE BLACK TERROR.
I DON'T THINK YOU'D LIKE FINDING OUT WHY. GIVE BACK THE MONEY AND STEP FREE.
WE NEED YOU.
WHO TH--? GET BACK, PAL-- OR YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS ARE COOKED.
KTCHNG!
WE'RE NOT WITH THEM...
ALTHOUGH I CAN EASILY UNDERSTAND WHY YOU WOULD THINK THAT.
BUT LET ME ASSURE YOU...
AGGHH-- MY HAND! H-HE BROKE MY WRIST!!
I--I DON'T GET IT. WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
PAL, WHAT SAY WE GO OUTSIDE AND MY FRIEND WITH THE OVER-ACTIVE MUSCLES AND I WILL EXPLAIN IT TO YOU...
...WITHOUT USING FORCE.

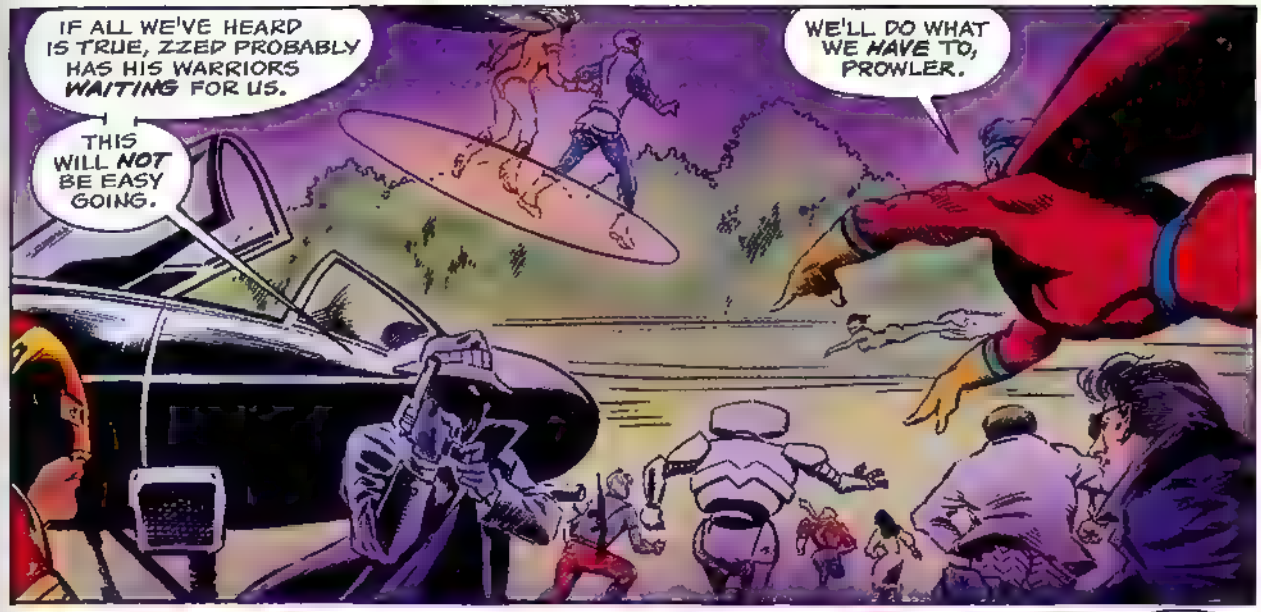
THE MEXICAN DESERT GROWS COLD AS THE SUN BECOMES A GOLDEN SLIVER AT HIGH NOON.
THE SHAKEN ARCHAEOLOGICAL CREW AT TEZHUACATPLAN HAS HEADED HOME. THE LIBERTY PROJECT DOES LIKEWISE.
SLICK, I'M REALLY NOT SURE ABOUT THIS...
LET IT SLIDE, CRACKSHOT. DR. LINNIER TOLD US WE SHOULD ALWAYS PRACTICE OUR SKILLS.
HOT-WIRING CARS IS ONE OF MINE.
GO STRAIGHT WHEN YOU GET HOME, FLAT-TOP. OR DO YOU WANNA WALK BACK TO THE STATES?!
BUT I THOUGHT WE WERE SUPPOSED TO BE GOING STRAIGHT.
NOTE: SEE THE SERAPHIM OBJECTIVE #1 FOR DETAILS --FRED
HEADS UP, PARDNERS. EITHER I'M SEEIN' THINGS OR THAT'S A CHICANA DRESSED LIKE SKYWOLF.
HEY, WHO'S COMPLAINING? SHE'S EASIER ON THE EYES THAN THE GENUINE ARTICLE.
HEY, WHAT'RE YOU TRYIN' TO DO? CAN'T YOU TALK?
OH, GREAT. SHE CAN'T. ANYBODY KNOW ANY OF THAT FINGER WAGGLE?
YES... I LEARNED IT A FEW YEARS AGO... IN PRISON.
OH, EXCUUUUSE ME-- LIKE WE WERE ALL AT A PARTY AT THE TIME.
SHE SAYS HER NAME IS L-A-L-U-P-I-N-A... WHATEVER THAT MEANS.
IT'S SPANISH. IT MEANS THE WOLF BITCH.
SHE WANTS US TO COME WITH HER.
OH, GREAT... THIS IS REAL SMART.
THE WOLF BITCH DROPS OUT OF THE SKY AND SAYS, R'NGAWA -- COME WITH ME. AND WHAT DO WE DO?
THIS IS REEEEAL SMART...
24

IN THE HOME OF THE MASKED MAN...
BARN! IT'S GETTING DARK OUTSIDE--AND IT'S ONLY THREE O'CLOCK!
I KNOW, DICK! JUST IN TIME FOR RADIO BOY!
BUT, BARN--THIS MUST BE AN ECLIPSE!
IMPOSSIBLE. THERE'S NOT SUPPOSED TO BE AN ECLIPSE UNTIL NOVEMBER.
THEN SOMETHING'S UP! LET'S GO!
NOW?! BUT I HAVEN'T SEEN THIS EPISODE!
C'MON!
AT LEAST LET ME GET MY STUFF!
MEANWHILE...
BUMMER, MO! IT'S THREE O'CLOCK, AND IT'S PITCH BLACK OUT!
BUT, MAX--HOW WILL WE GET A TAN?!
THE CALIFORNIA GIRLS' SWIM-SUITS DESIGNED BY CASEY ROBBINS, SAN FRANCISCO, CA.
ONLY MS. TREE DOESN'T SEEM TO NOTICE.
BUT, THEN, HER WORLD IS ALWAYS DARK.

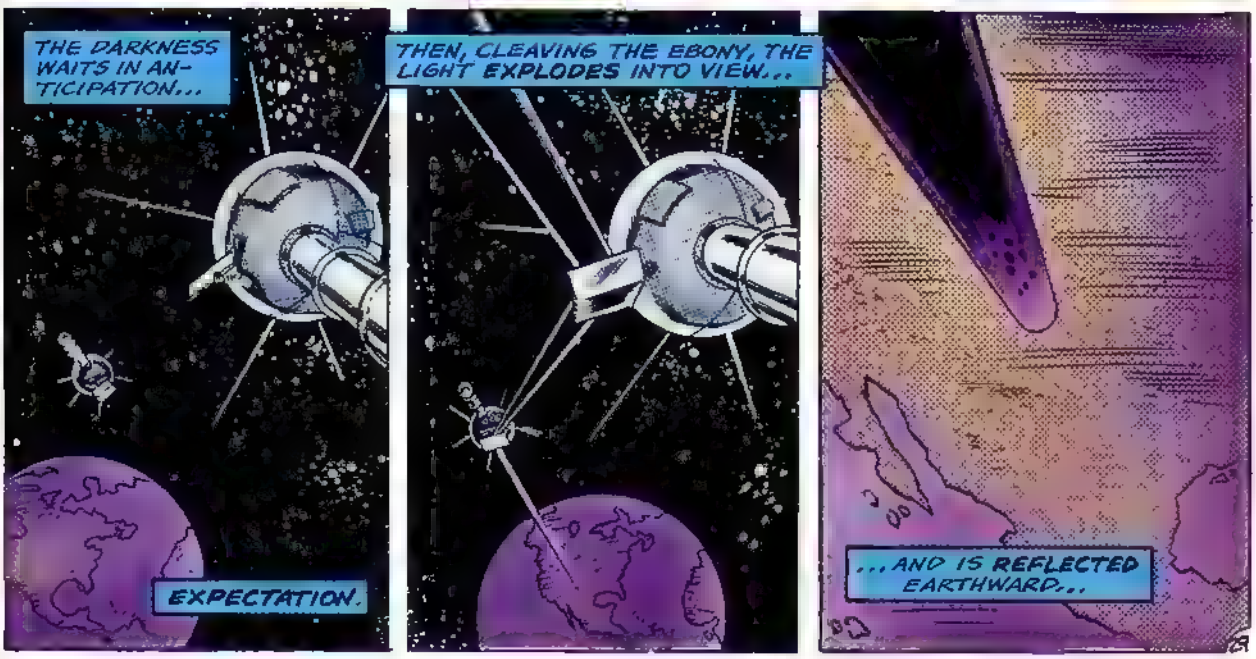

AND NOW WE GO ELSEWHERE... TO ANOTHER PLACE, ANOTHER LAND. ONE WITH THINGS AND CREATURES, AND THE BEING WHO BATTLES THEM WITH HIS LAST BREATH...
THE WORLD HAS GONE MAD, BUT I AM HERE TO RIGHT WRONGS. TO CORRECT UNCORRECTNESS. TO BOLDLY BATTLE WHAT NO MAN HAS BATTLED BEFORE!
...THIS IS THE LAND OF DOC STEARN--MR. MONSTER!
NO MATTER HOW MANY CARS--SOME ACTUALLY MADE IN THE U.S.OF A.--TURN INTO NEFARIOUS CREATURES FROM HELLSPAWN, MR. MONSTER SHALL DEFEAT THEM OR DIE TRYING.
BEEEP-BE-BE-BEEEP!
WHAT? THE 1957 THUNDERBIRD COMPLETE WITH OUT-MODED FINS SEEKS TO ESCAPE ME...
...BUT NOTHING...NOTHING, CAN EVER ESCAPE THE VIGILANT VIGILANCE OF MR. MONSTER, MONSTER DE-STROYER.
EEE-KONK!
LOOK--THERE. HE MUST BE THE ONE WE'RE LOOK-ING FOR.
NO! IT SEEKS TO TOSS ME OFF. A NIGHT-MARISH BUCKING BRONCO. AND I THOUGHT THIS WAS A THUNDERBIRD, NOT A MUSTANG!
BLAM!
DIE, YOU CURSED CAR. YOU ATROCIOUS AUTO. DIE! DIE! DIE!
DO I HEAR THE DEATH RATTLE OF AUTO-POSSESSING DEMONS? DO I SEE THE OIL-SOAKED BLOOD-STAINS INDICATING MY LATEST SUCCESS?
OOOOPS!
MY MONSTER TRANSMOGRI-FICATOR!
SCREEEEEEEE!!
26

HEAD, WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF TIME.
YOU THINK I DON'T KNOW THAT?
BUT WE'RE HERE FOR A REASON.
I KNOW. I KNOW. TO GET HELP.
AND SO FAR WE'VE GOTTEN A BEAN...
I LIKE HIM. HE'S CUTE.
AND A DUCK. AND A GOD. AND NOW A CRAZY MAN?
ALL RIGHT-- LOWER THE ROPE.
I CAN'T BELIEVE THIS IS THE MILITIA TO SAVE THE UNIVERSE.
LET'S DRAG HIM ABOARD AND GET OUT OF HERE. HEAD, I'LL TALK TO HIM THROUGH THE EXTERIOR JUKEBOX SPEAKER.
EXCUSE ME...
VA-VOOM!
A GOOD BATTLE MUST NEVER BE INTERFERED WITH.
PRIORITIES, MAN-- PRIORITIES!
NOT NOW-- I'M IN THE MIDST OF DEFEATING THIS DEMON CAR FROM HELL (OR DETROIT--WHICHEVER SENT IT AFTER ME).
IN CASE YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED, YOU'RE FIGHTING A TIME ANOMALY... WE NEED HELP IN PREVENTING THEM FROM DESTROYING THE UNIVERSE.
COME WITH US.
YOU WANT ME TO SAVE THE UNIVERSE? WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY SO? MR. MONSTER IS ALWAYS ALERT. ALWAYS VIGILANT. ALWAYS CHEAP!
JUST HOLD ON WHILE I STRIP THIS CAR OF ITS VERY LIFE!
IT WILL TAKE BUT A MOMENT.
VARLET! TO THE DEATH!
ACE, WE HAVEN'T GOT TIME. WE MUST LEAVE NOW.
WAIT! WAIT! I JUST HAVE TO CONVERT IT TO PROTO-MATTER.
IT WON'T TAKE--
DAMN! YOU CAN'T SAVE THE UNIVERSE WITHOUT MR. MONSTER!
OH, WELL...
PERHAPS THERE ARE OTHER MONSTERS TO FIGHT?
ONE CAN ALWAYS WISH!


MEXICO.
THE SUN IS ALMOST FULLY ECLIPSED.
AND WE ARE READY.
I, FOR ONE, CANNOT WAIT.
THIS IS THE FRUITION OF ALL MY PLANS.
NOT YOUR PLANS, ZZED-- MINE.
YOU'LL GET YOUR WISH. YOU WILL DIE-- BUT IN MY FASHION.
AND TO ACHIEVE MY ENDS.
THE END OF ALL TIME STREAMS BUT ONE!
HURRY! THE TOTAL ECLIPSE IS MOVING FASTER THAN ANY OF US EXPECTED.
IT'S GOT TO BE STOPPED!
WE'VE GOT TO STOP IT!!


IF ALL WE'VE HEARD IS TRUE, ZZED PROBABLY HAS HIS WARRIORS WAITING FOR US.
THIS WILL NOT BE EASY GOING.
WE'LL DO WHAT WE HAVE TO, PROWLER.

THAT IS THE TEMPLE? WHERE IS ZZED?
TO THE NORTH-- THAT'S WHERE THE JEWEL WAS AIMED.
THEN WHAT THE HELL ARE WE WAITING FOR?
LET'S GO TWIST SOME AZTEC NECKS.


THE DARKNESS WAITS IN ANTICIPATION...
EXPECTATION.
THEN, CLEAVING THE EBONY, THE LIGHT EXPLODES INTO VIEW...
...AND IS REFLECTED EARTHWARD...

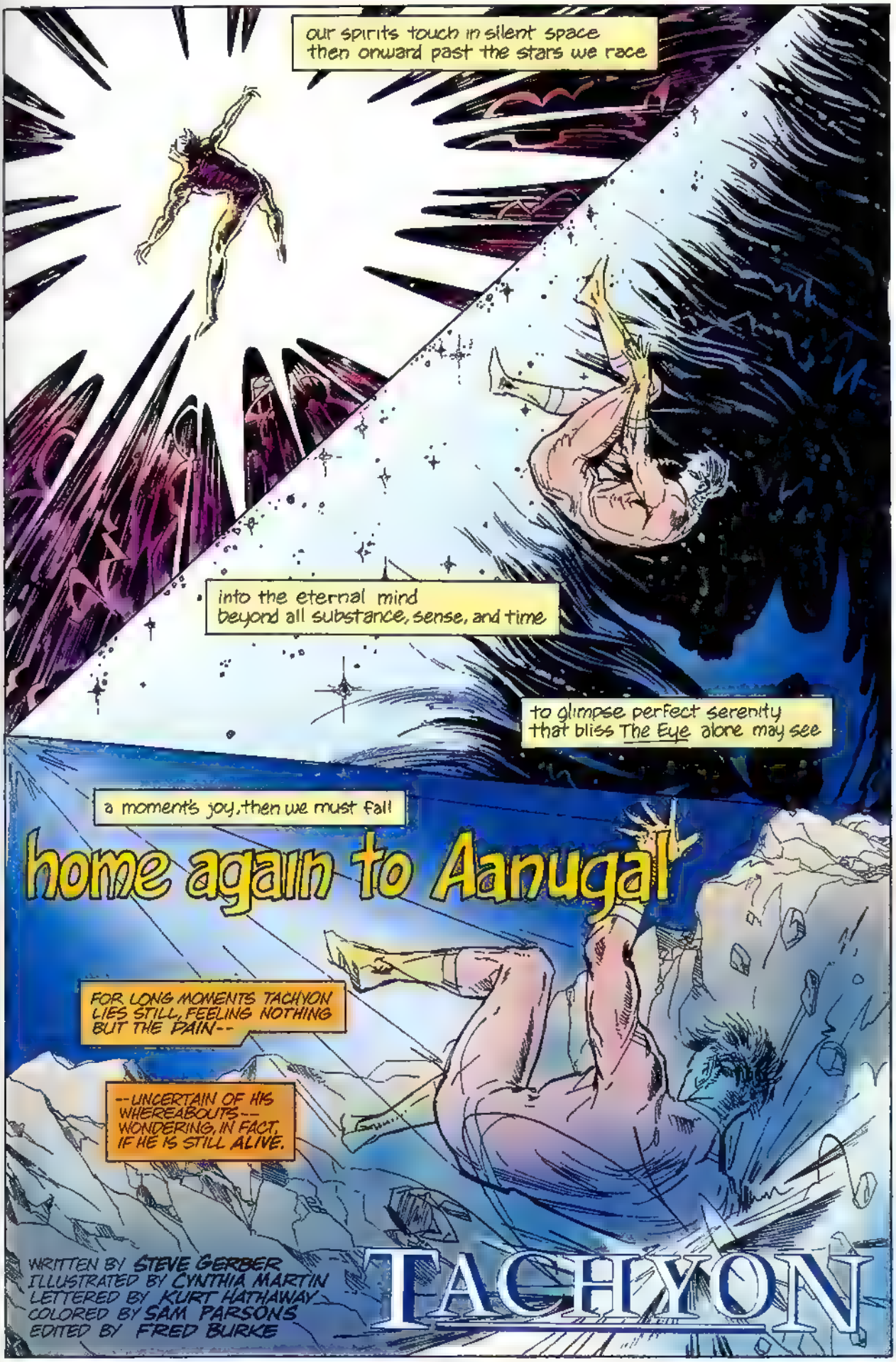
WE'RE TOO LATE.
CROC'S DEATH BEAM IS COMING..
MIRACLEMAN-- IT'S UP TO YOU!
TACHYON-- WE'VE ONLY GOT SECONDS... FOR GOD'S SAKE-- HURRY!
ZZED IS BEYOND THAT GEM...
...IF I CAN JUST KEEP THE BEAM FROM REACHING HIM--
YOU COME? BUT YOU'VE COME THIS FAR ONLY TO WITNESS FIRST HAND MY DEATH--
--AND THE DESTRUCTION OF ALL LIFE ON EARTH.
THIS IS THE MOMENT-- THIS, AT LONG LAST-- IS THE END!
NO! YOU WILL NOT BE VICTORIOUS... NOT EVEN IF I MUST DIE TO SAVE THE UNIVERSE!
THE PLAYERS ARE IN POSITION.
IT IS TIME--
-- NOW!!
30

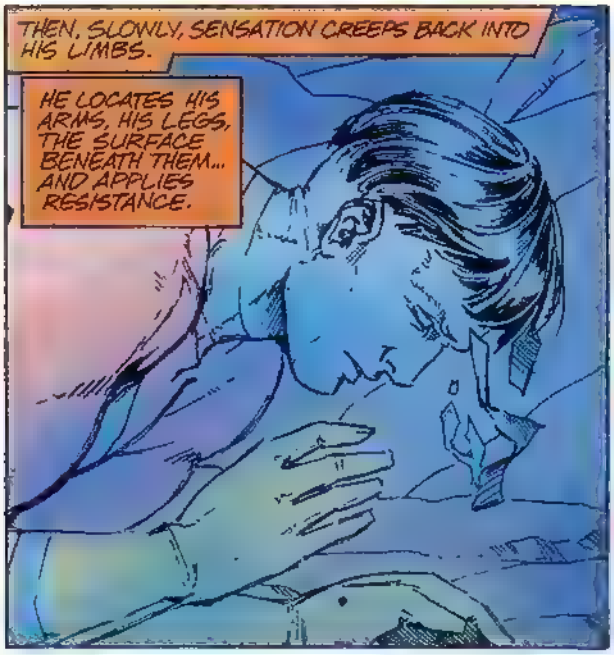
THIS IS OUR ONLY CHANCE-- AAAGH!
SSSzzzz
THAT WAS MEANT FOR ME-- NO! NOOO!
NOOOOOO
UNNNGH!
THE FOOL IS GONE, AND NOW IT IS MY TURN.
LET ME DIE-- NOW!
T-TACHYON-- HE'S GONE.
DESTROYED!
NO! HE'S GOT TO BE THERE... GOT TO BE SOMEWHERE!
DAMMIT, AVALON--USE YOUR MAGIC POWERS--BRING HIM BACK!
FOR GOD'S SAKE-- BRING HIM BACK!!

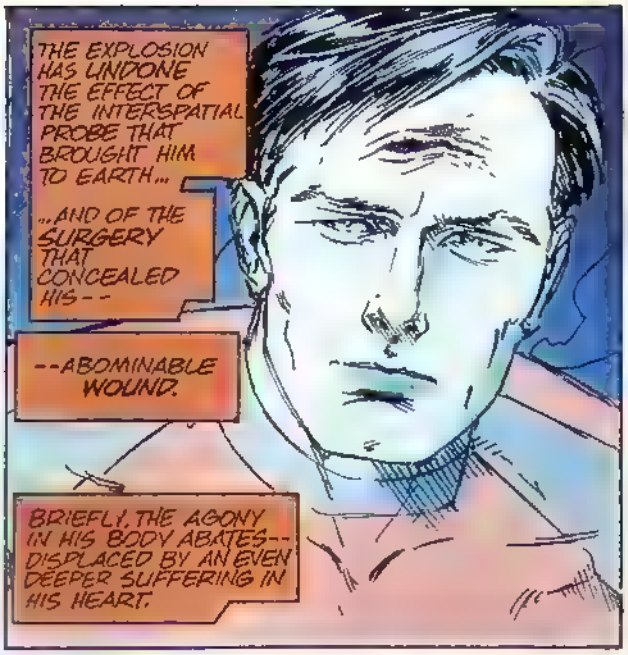
BUT THERE IS NOTHING THAT CAN BE DONE.
STUNNED, THEY IMPOTENTLY WATCH THEIR FRIEND, THEIR COMRADE, DWINDLE INTO A RAPIDLY FADING LIGHT EVAPORATING IN THE DARKNESS.
THEY HEAR HIS VOICE CALL TO THEM, THEN FADE BEHIND THE SCREAMS.
TACHYON IS GONE.
THEY ARE CAUGHT IN A SNAPSHOT OF THEIR OWN MORTALITY. THEIR LIFE FOR HIS...
...IT COULD HAVE BEEN ANY...OR ALL.
STUNNED, WEAKENED, STILL IN SHOCK, THEY BARELY HEAR THE SCREAMING BEHIND THEM.
YET IT GROWS WITH THUNDEROUS CACOPHONY. AND THEY TURN...
...TURN TOWARD THE PLAINTIVE WAILING. THE HORRIFIED PLEA FOR DISSOLUTION... THE AGONIZED CRY FOR FINAL, SILENT PEACE.
BUT ZZED LIVES...
...AND MORE--
--HE CHANGES!

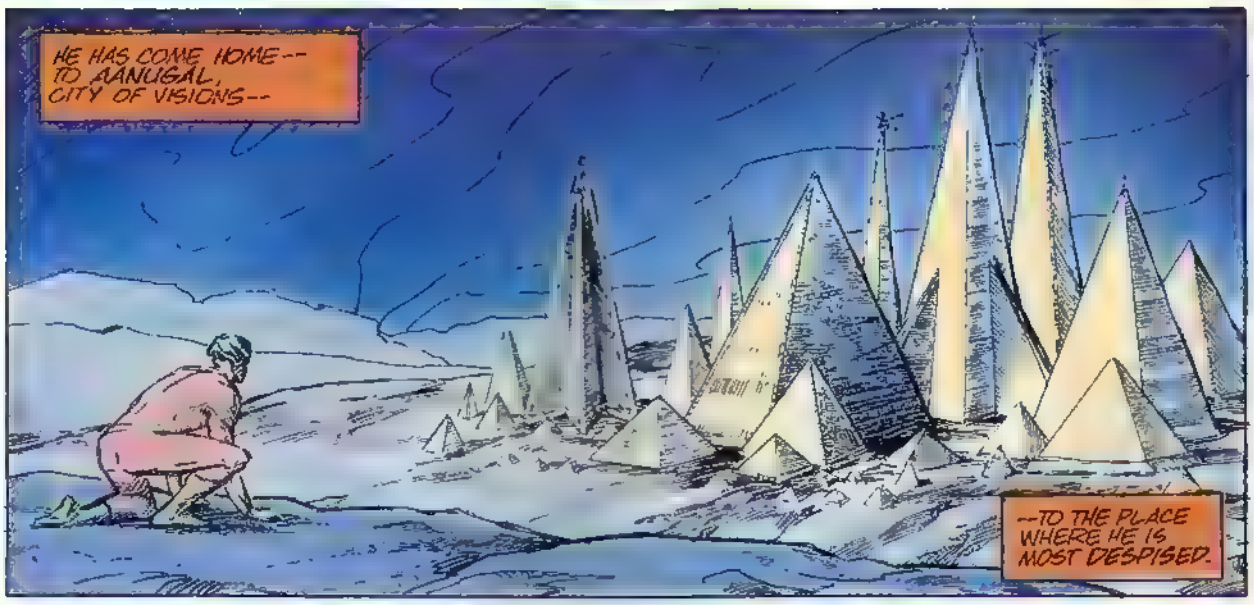
TO BE CONTINUED

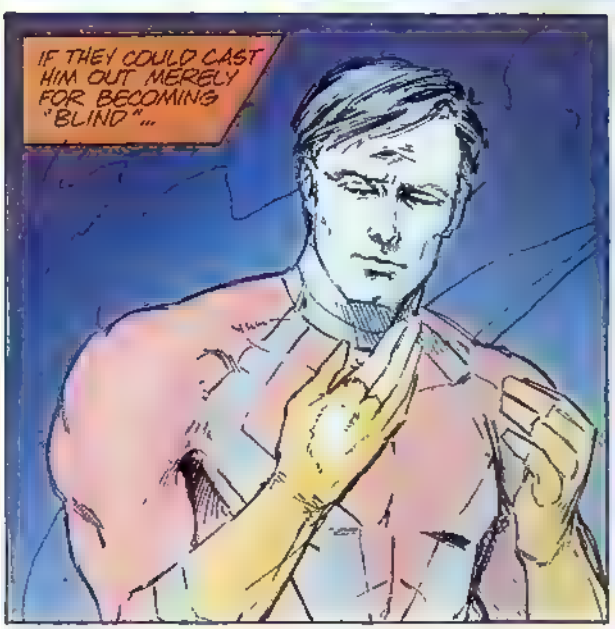
INTERLUDE:

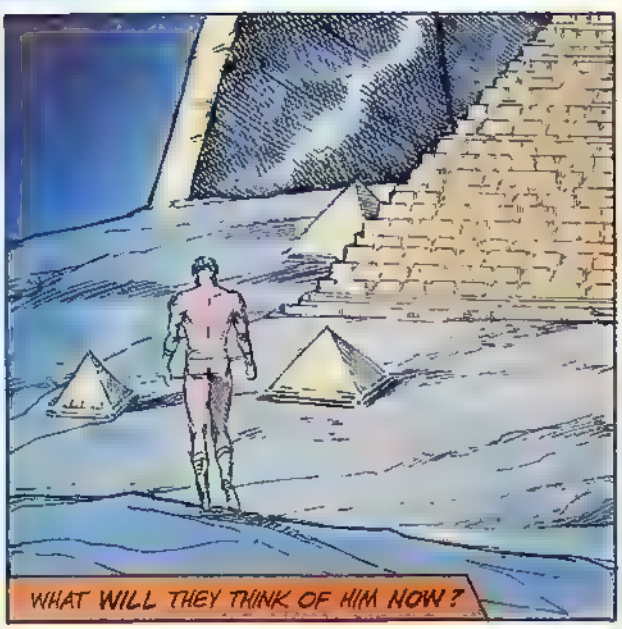

our spirits touch in silent space
then onward past the stars we race
into the eternal mind
beyond all substance, sense, and time
to glimpse perfect serenity
that bliss The Eye alone may see
a moment's joy, then we must fall
home again to Aanugal
FOR LONG MOMENTS TACHYON LIES STILL, FEELING NOTHING BUT THE PAIN--
--UNCERTAIN OF HIS WHEREABOUTS--- WONDERING, IN FACT, IF HE IS STILL ALIVE.
WRITTEN BY STEVE GERBER
ILLUSTRATED BY CYNTHIA MARTIN
LETTERED BY KURT HATHAWAY
COLORED BY SAM PARSONS
EDITED BY FRED BURKE
TACHYON


THEN, SLOWLY, SENSATION CREEPS BACK INTO HIS LIMBS.
HE LOCATES HIS ARMS, HIS LEGS, THE SURFACE BENEATH THEM... AND APPLIES RESISTANCE.


THE EXPLOSION HAS UNDONE THE EFFECT OF THE INTERSPATIAL PROBE THAT BROUGHT HIM TO EARTH...
...AND OF THE SURGERY THAT CONCEALED HIS--
--ABOMINABLE WOUND.
BRIEFLY, THE AGONY IN HIS BODY ABATES-- DISPLACED BY AN EVEN DEEPER SUFFERING IN HIS HEART.

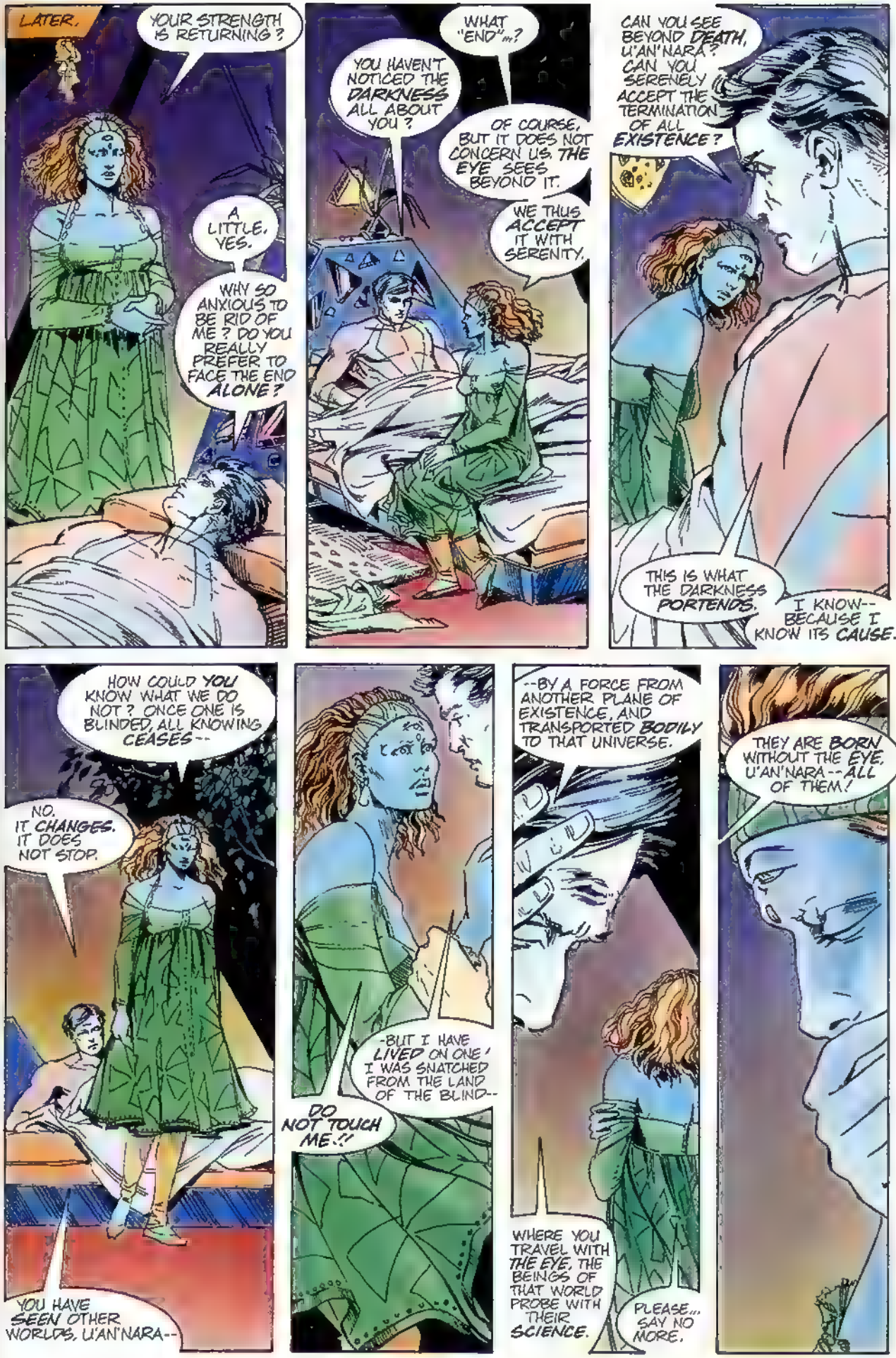

HE HAS COME HOME-- TO AANUGAL, CITY OF VISIONS--
--TO THE PLACE WHERE HE IS MOST DESPISED.


IF THEY COULD CAST HIM OUT MERELY FOR BECOMING "BLIND"...


WHAT WILL THEY THINK OF HIM NOW?

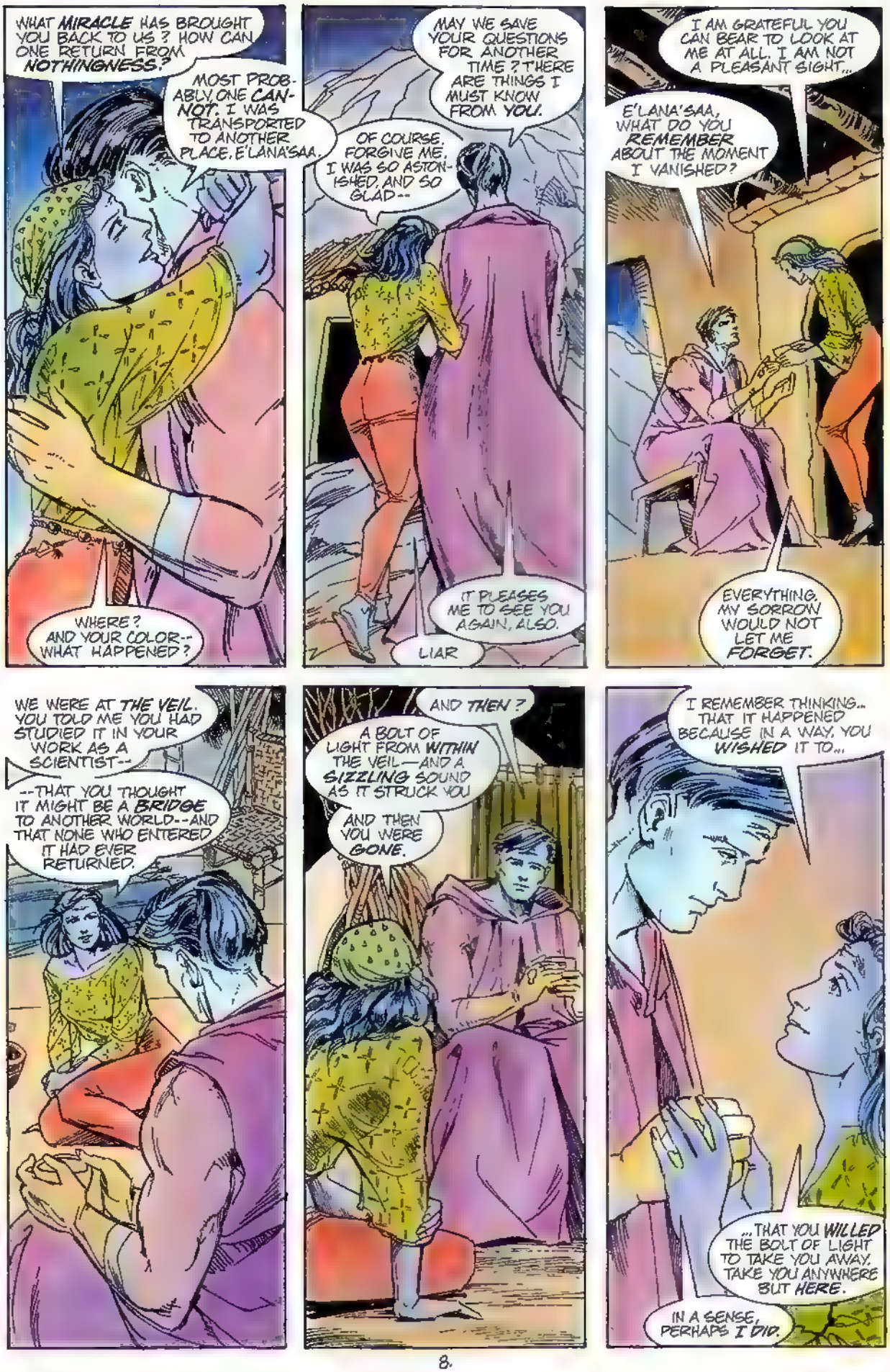
FATHER...?!
TA'AKA'T'KIAN...?!
IT'S BEEN...A LONG TIME, U'AN'NARA...SINCE ANYONE SPOKE... MY TRUE NAME...!
MAY I...COME IN...?
BUT THE LAW FORBIDS--
I AM HURT, U'AN'NARA... PERHAPS DYING...!
TA'AKA'T'KIAN, PLEASE...
DOES THE LAW DENY... EVEN SIMPLE MERCY.. TO... THOSE...
...WHO HAVE LOST.. THE VISION...?

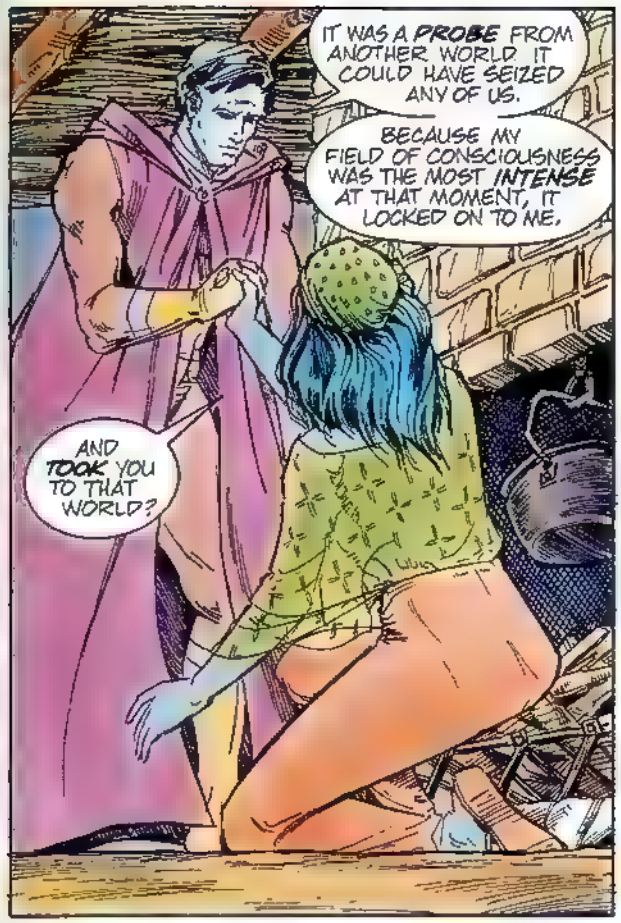
IS SHE... ALIVE...?
YES, YES... YOU SAVED HER, THANK, SERENITY...!
YOU CREDIT... THE WRONG PRINCIPLE..
THANK... SACRIFICE...
...FOR I SHALL NEVER KNOW SERENITY AGAIN...!
EEEEEE
WHY DID YOU COME BACK?
HAVE YOU NOT HURT US ENOUGH?

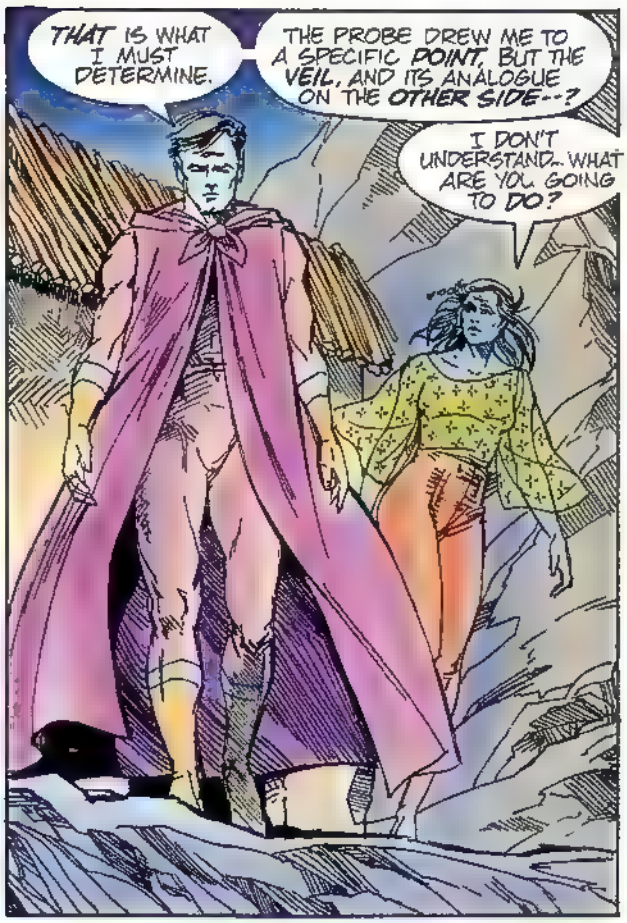

LATER.
YOUR STRENGTH IS RETURNING?
A LITTLE. YES.
WHY SO ANXIOUS TO BE RID OF ME? DO YOU REALLY PREFER TO FACE THE END ALONE?
WHAT "END"...?
YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED THE DARKNESS ALL ABOUT YOU?
OF COURSE, BUT IT DOES NOT CONCERN US. THE EYE SEES BEYOND IT.
WE THUS ACCEPT IT WITH SERENITY.
CAN YOU SEE BEYOND DEATH, U'AN'NARA? CAN YOU SERENELY ACCEPT THE TERMINATION OF ALL EXISTENCE?
THIS IS WHAT THE DARKNESS PORTENDS.
I KNOW--BECAUSE I KNOW ITS CAUSE.
HOW COULD YOU KNOW WHAT WE DO NOT? ONCE ONE IS BLINDED, ALL KNOWING CEASES--
NO. IT CHANGES. IT DOES NOT STOP.
YOU HAVE SEEN OTHER WORLDS, U'AN'NARA--
-BUT I HAVE LIVED ON ONE! I WAS SNATCHED FROM THE LAND OF THE BLIND--
DO NOT TOUCH ME!!
--BY A FORCE FROM ANOTHER PLANE OF EXISTENCE, AND TRANSPORTED BODILY TO THAT UNIVERSE.
WHERE YOU TRAVEL WITH THE EYE, THE BEINGS OF THAT WORLD PROBE WITH THEIR SCIENCE.
PLEASE... SAY NO MORE.
THEY ARE BORN WITHOUT THE EYE, U'AN'NARA--ALL OF THEM!

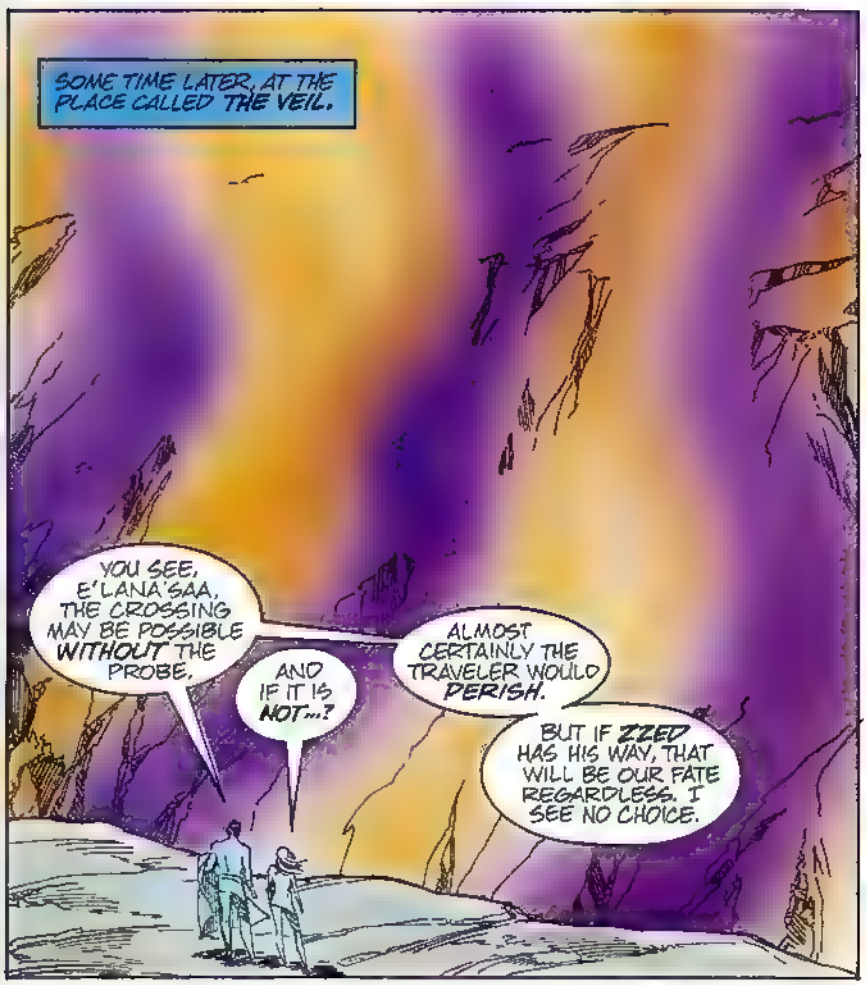
AND ON THAT WORLD, I HAD ABILITIES SURPASSING ALL THE VISIONS OF AANUGAL.
I COULD FLY, U'AN'NARA NOT IN DREAMS, NOT IN MEDITATION-- IN MY BODY.
I HAD STRENGTH SUCH AS YOU CANNOT IMAGINE!
AND I LEARNED I COULD SURVIVE IN CONDITIONS OF TENSION--
STOP...
--THAT THE PASSIVE SERENITY OF THE EYE IS NOT THE ONLY IDEAL STATE OF BEING!
NO!
YOUR BLINDNESS HAS DRIVEN YOU MAD!
THAT--OR WHATEVER TURNED YOU PALE AS A NEWBORN!
SSWAK
AN EXPLOSION CAUSED MY PALLOR, U'AN'NARA.
I PLACED MYSELF BETWEEN IT AND FRIENDS... MUCH AS I DID FOR OUR DAUGHTER.
AND GAINED NOTHING FROM YOUR SACRIFICE IN EITHER INSTANCE.
NOTHING? I'SANA'KAA'S LIFE--
PERHAPS HER DEATH WAS PREFERABLE TO DEPRIVING ANOTHER OF THE VISION.
PERHAPS IT WAS HER TIME TO DIE.
NO IT WAS NOT.
TELL I'SANA'KAA THAT I LOVE HER-- AND THAT ONCE I LOVED YOU.
SHE OUGHT TO KNOW.

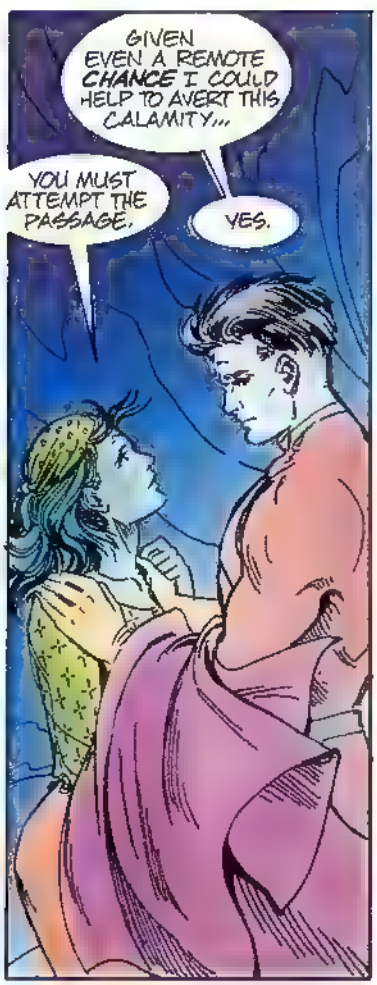
HOW MANY PRECIOUS MOMENTS DID I SQUANDER ON EARTH, LONGING FOR HOME...?
NOW, ALL MY THOUGHTS ARE OF THAT WORLD--
--AND OF THE PEOPLE THERE WHO SEEMED TO CARE FOR ME.
I ONLY PRAY THAT THEY SURVIVE THIS CRISIS ZZED HAS THRUST UPON US...
...BECAUSE I WISH TO GO BACK.
U'AN'NARA WAS RIGHT IN ONE RESPECT.
I CANNOT LIVE OUT MY LIFE...
...IN THIS CITY OF THE BLIND.
CAN IT BE... T'AKA'T'KIAN--!?
YOU SAID HE DIED.
SAW HIM DISINTEGRATE. DIDN'T EXPECT HIM BACK.


WHAT MIRACLE HAS BROUGHT YOU BACK TO US? HOW CAN ONE RETURN FROM NOTHINGNESS?
MOST PROBABLY ONE CANNOT. I WAS TRANSPORTED TO ANOTHER PLACE, E'LANA'SAA.
WHERE? AND YOUR COLOR--WHAT HAPPENED?
MAY WE SAVE YOUR QUESTIONS FOR ANOTHER TIME? THERE ARE THINGS I MUST KNOW FROM YOU.
OF COURSE. FORGIVE ME. I WAS SO ASTONISHED, AND SO GLAD--
IT PLEASES ME TO SEE YOU AGAIN, ALSO.
LIAR
I AM GRATEFUL YOU CAN BEAR TO LOOK AT ME AT ALL. I AM NOT A PLEASANT SIGHT...
E'LANA'SAA, WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT THE MOMENT I VANISHED?
EVERYTHING. MY SORROW WOULD NOT LET ME FORGET.
WE WERE AT THE VEIL. YOU TOLD ME YOU HAD STUDIED IT IN YOUR WORK AS A SCIENTIST--
--THAT YOU THOUGHT IT MIGHT BE A BRIDGE TO ANOTHER WORLD--AND THAT NONE WHO ENTERED IT HAD EVER RETURNED.
AND THEN?
A BOLT OF LIGHT FROM WITHIN THE VEIL—AND A SIZZLING SOUND AS IT STRUCK YOU
AND THEN YOU WERE GONE.
I REMEMBER THINKING... THAT IT HAPPENED BECAUSE IN A WAY, YOU WISHED IT TO...
...THAT YOU WILLED THE BOLT OF LIGHT TO TAKE YOU AWAY. TAKE YOU ANYWHERE BUT HERE.
IN A SENSE, PERHAPS I DID.


IT WAS A PROBE FROM ANOTHER WORLD. IT COULD HAVE SEIZED ANY OF US.
BECAUSE MY FIELD OF CONSCIOUSNESS WAS THE MOST INTENSE AT THAT MOMENT, IT LOCKED ON TO ME.
AND TOOK YOU TO THAT WORLD?


THAT IS WHAT I MUST DETERMINE.
THE PROBE DREW ME TO A SPECIFIC POINT, BUT THE VEIL, AND ITS ANALOGUE ON THE OTHER SIDE--?
I DON'T UNDERSTAND.. WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO?


SOME TIME LATER, AT THE PLACE CALLED THE VEIL.
YOU SEE, E'LANA'SAA, THE CROSSING MAY BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE PROBE.
AND IF IT IS NOT--?
ALMOST CERTAINLY THE TRAVELER WOULD PERISH.
BUT IF ZZED HAS HIS WAY, THAT WILL BE OUR FATE REGARDLESS. I SEE NO CHOICE.


GIVEN EVEN A REMOTE CHANCE I COULD HELP TO AVERT THIS CALAMITY...
YOU MUST ATTEMPT THE PASSAGE.
YES.

WISH ME WELL, E'LANA'SAA...
I DO. BUT MORE, I WISH--
--YOU WOULD NOT GO.
...I WILL NOT LOSE YOU AGAIN...
NO...
TO BE CONTINUED
"...IN A UNIVERSE-SPANNING THREE-PART MINI-SERIES THAT WILL CHANGE THE COURSE OF TACHYON'S EXISTENCE AND CHALLENGE YOUR EVERY ASSUMPTION ABOUT SUPERHERO COMICS--COMING SOON FROM ECLIPSE!

In Chicago Even Beans Do It!

by Dean Mullaney

Let's resume our trip through Eclipse history where we left off last issue.

In order to premiere the *Detectives, Inc.* graphic novel at the 1980 Chicago Comicon, Don and Marsha McGregor and I, with a couple of friends, left New York by car, stopped long enough in Pennsylvania to pick up a few boxes of advance copies from the printer, and hit I-80 for Chicago. Feeling appropriately tired after the sixteen hour drive, we caught only a portion of the required eight hours and the next morning were ready to take the city by storm with our new book.

Then, just as the doors were about to open, I looked at Don, he looked at me. Panic attack: "Would they like the book?" While we were confident that it was good, there's always that last minute doubt when you open the tightly sealed box and break out that first copy for the fans.

We had nothing to worry about. The first person who came up to the table shelled out his six bucks, got Don to autograph the book, and nodded appreciatively as he skimmed through the pages. We knew we had a hit. We actually ran out of copies long before the convention was over.

It was only about a year ago that I learned who the first buyer was on that early morning in Chicago. The guy who nodded so appreciatively was none other than the Head Bean himself, Larry Marder! Just think, if we had a *Total Eclipse* series ten years ago, Beanish might have suddenly appeared in the middle of a murder mystery involving lesbian midwives and private detectives in Manhattan!

At that Chicago Comicon, I also met Max Allan Collins, who had recently taken over writing *Dick Tracy*. Max's first two complete stories had gained him a legion of fans, among whom I was proud to be counted. For me, at least, he revitalized the strip.

At any rate, Max and artist Terry Beatty had produced a series of one-page "minute mysteries" featuring a private detective, Mike Mist. Max pitched the idea of a magazine collection of *Mike*

Mist's Minute Mist-eries, and it became the next project on the Eclipse schedule.

Around this time (late 1980), the growth of the comics specialty market accelerated. We felt that in *only* publishing graphic novels, we were shutting out the fertile area of short stories. After all, not every story needed 50 or 80 pages in which to be told. Similarly, not every artist had the time to produce an entire graphic novel.

Thus, *Eclipse Magazine* was born. I envisioned the magazine as an eclectic mix of continuing series, short pieces, serious adventure, and broad humor. I approached Max and Terry about creating a continuing character and they responded with the innovative detective series, *Ms. Tree*. It's a credit to both of them that eight years later, Ms. Tree is *still* being published, making it one of the most successful creator-owned series in modern comics history.

In many ways, *Eclipse Magazine* was a microcosm of what Eclipse would later become. Within the black-and-white pages of the first issue, we had Steve Englehart and Marshall Rogers' "Foozle," a "heavy" death parable by Jim Starlin, a humorous look at death by Howard Cruse, a lovely silent fantasy by P. Craig Russell, a humor piece by Chris Browne and Trina Robbins, the aforementioned "Ms. Tree," and a cover painting by Paul Gulacy.

One criticism I've heard about Eclipse's output over the years has been that we're too eclectic. In reviewing the contents of that first issue, and looking at some of the varied items we're publishing today—a costumed adventure series (*Airboy*), a current events graphic album (*Brought to Light*), modern horror stories (Clive Barker's *Tapping the Vein*), Japanese comics (*Appleseed*), science fiction (Tim Truman's *Scout*), and others—I'm *proud* of the fact that we're eclectic. If I were to publish forty versions of the same concept month after month I'd...well, I'd rather be picking apples.

If anyone ever wanted the status quo from us, they've been sorely disappointed.

The first art director for *Eclipse Magazine* was Rich Bruning, who now holds that position at DC. Rich and I were friends for many years and, with the advent of the new magazine, were anxious to work together. I remember the day we designed the contents page for the first issue. It was one of those incredibly frigid days in Madison, Wisconsin, where Rich then lived and worked. I was out on a visit from New York, and we agreed that it was more prudent to stay in the studio until that "brilliant" design appeared to us like the proverbial light bulb over our heads than to brave the winds coming off Lake Mendota.

I think Rich and I are perhaps the only two people who know how much of an influence we had on each other's design sense at the time. Rich, as you know, went on to edit the short-lived line of Capital Comics (including *Nexus*), and from there to his current position at DC. I've been in large part responsible for the design of Eclipse's comics (with lots of help from folks such as Cat, Scott McCloud, and Mack Fraga). This winter, when you find yourself preferring to stay out of the cold, pull out a bunch of Capital, Eclipse, and DC comics from their mylar snuggies. You might be amused to see how many ads and text pages contain similar elements. Rich's fascination with tilted black bars with white type in them have certainly found their way into Eclipse's comics, and my love for the three parallel lines design element introduced by Walter Dorwin Teague in the 1930s has crept into Rich's efforts.

Eclipse Magazine remains one of my favorites because of its diversity of material. The open ended editorial position allowed me to include work by "underground" cartoonists Hunt Emerson, Kaz, Rick Geary, and Larry Rippee, alongside "straight" cartoonists Marshall Rogers,

Mike Kaluta, and Steve Leialoha, sprinkled with a few then unknowns. A look through those issues will find among other things, the first published comics story by Kent Williams!

We also introduced some great continuing series, including "Ms. Tree," Englehart and Rogers' "Coyote," B.C. Boyer's "The Masked Man," and perhaps the finest thing we've ever published, Don McGregor and Gene Colan's "Ragamuffins."

1981 also brought Jim Starlin's *The Price* graphic novel into print. After watching Eclipse and other companies grow, Marvel Comics was playing creators' rights catch-up in 1981. They had recently introduced *Epic Illustrated* and were negotiating hard with Jim Starlin for a Starlin-owned graphic novel. That book involved the "Metamorphosis Odyssey" storyline Jim had started in *Epic* magazine. Jim wasn't happy with the new agreement proposed by Marvel/Epic.

Jim's a very clever fellow. He knew that he was negotiating not just for himself, but for every creator who was trying to squeeze a decent deal out of Marvel. He was blazing a contractual path for his peers at a company where creator ownership was not something management wanted to give.

And so Jim brought the next chapter in the "Metamorphosis Odyssey" saga to us, where he knew he could get the deal he wanted. It was by using our deal, and our contract, that Jim was later able to successfully leverage a fair contract from Marvel for himself and for all creators who've since received reasonable contracts from that company.

An odd thing about Marvel's choice of the name "Epic" for their creator-owned line of comics; If I had a nickel for every time someone has confused the "Epic" name with the "Eclipse" name, I'd have bought the MGM library, instead of it now residing with Ted Turner! More than one person has commented on the suggestiveness of Marvel's name choice.

In late 1981, Steve Gerber decided to sue Marvel Comics over ownership of Howard the Duck. Legally, it was a complicated case, and I won't get into the details here, but lest you wonder what side we were on, Eclipse's first color comic, *Destroyer Duck*, gives the answer.

Steve and I had been friends for many years and still spoke on the phone nearly every day even after he moved to the West Coast in the late '70s. When Steve decided to take Marvel to court, he and I spent months trying to devise a publication that would raise money to help fund the lawsuit. Now, with the case since settled out of court, I feel it's safe to reveal some of the decidedly wacky concepts we came up with.

Perhaps the strangest was to be a membership club, a parody of Marvel's F.O.O.M. fan organization. Instead of receiving a giant poster of the Marvel characters and assorted character buttons as you received from F.O.O.M., our club was going to give you something a little bit different. First, there was the button you could proudly wear, demanding, "Make Marvel Mine!" Second, there was the big poster: "We dare you to enter...The House of Ideas!" showing comics writers and artists in a dungeon, each placed on different torture devices. In the foreground, the legs of some giant torturer, twisting the wheel of the rack.

Eventually, however, we narrowed the fundraisers down to two possibilities: Sell 1,000 copies of a $100.00 limited edition comic book, or sell 100,000 copies of a $1.00 unlimited edition comic book. It's kind of like the gag in Laurel and Hardy's *March of the Wooden Toy Soldiers*, in which the fellows, working in Santa Claus's shop, mistake an order for 600 toy soldiers one foot tall and make 100 soldiers six feet tall!

Unlike Stan and Ollie, Steve and I got it right and decided on 100,000 comics at $1.50. We sold

80,000 copies immediately, and everyone involved in the project—penciller Jack Kirby, inker and colorist Steve Leialoha, cover inker Neal Adams, co-editor Mark Evanier, Dan Spiegle, Sergio Aragones, Marty Pasko, Joe Staton, Shary Flenniken, Gordon Kent, and we at Eclipse—donated our efforts gratis.

Aside from the political ramifications, *Destroyer Duck* #1 was a landmark in a number of other ways. It proved that color comics were viable for Eclipse. It introduced Sergio Aragones's "Groo the Barbarian." And, most important for Eclipse's future direction, the person who pitched in to color the back cover while visiting me in New York was none other than Cat Yronwode. I didn't realize at the time that what became the most important romantic involvement of my life would be so vital to Eclipse's future as well. Eclipse's push into color comics wouldn't have been possible without Cat's color expertise and printing experience.

Following *Destroyer Duck* in 1982 were *Sabre* and *Ms. Tree's Thrilling Detective Adventures*, as Cat created her role as head of the coloring department. Elaine Lee and Charles Vess's back-up series in *Sabre*, incidentally, contained the first comics coloring by Lynn Varley.

One of the funniest instances of Cat's devotion to duty at Eclipse occurred, of all places, near the United Airlines ticket counter at San Francisco International Airport. An artist had forgotten to draw a bikini on the major female character in a story, leaving her completely naked on almost every page. Since the script distinctly called for her to be clothed, something had to be done, and fast. The artist had both illustrated and colored the story, and turned in the job late to boot. In order to make the printing deadline, we had color proofs made first and then sent to us for corrections. In fact, the art was turned in so late we had the color proofs shipped via United Airlines' package service directly to the airport so Cat could check the proofs and get it back to the color engraver the next morning. What she didn't realize until she saw the proofs was the extent of the artist's error. So she spread the proofs out in a circle around her on the floor at the airport and began marking where the black bikini should be.

I went to get a cup of what Raymond Chandler called "the lifeblood of tired men," and when I returned, I couldn't see Cat because she was surrounded by of a crowd of twenty or thirty people. They must have thought it an interesting way to pass the time between connecting flights, and when she explained what she was doing, they got into the act, yelling, "There's *another* bare ass" and "Don't forget the bikini on *that* one!"

The job was eventually done, the crowd dispersed to make their various flights, and the book was printed according to the writer's script. I've often wondered since, what with the media brouhaha about "sex and violence" in comics, if those people cheering Cat on at the airport that night think a little better of comics, knowing that the people producing them actually care about making them good.

I'd like to believe so.

By the time 1983 rolled around, and with Eclipse production drastically increased, I moved more into the publishing side of the business and Cat took on more and more of the editorial duties. It was also the beginning of the Eclipse editorial office's trek cross country, stopping briefly in Missouri and ending up here in Northern California (where, contrary to the belief of our friends on the East Coast, the seasons *do* change).

Next issue: Cat and I move to California and find Sean Deming juggling on a unicycle, while Mark Evanier and Will Meugniot create The DNAgents, Marshall Rogers becomes Cap'n Quick (or was that a Foozle?), and an unpublished Will Eisner gem from the 1940s escapes Will's vault and becomes an Eclipse comic!

WHO'S WHO
IN TOTAL ECLIPSE

Miraclewoman The New Olympian pantheon's Goddess of love, she brings a new morality to London.

Using his powerful intellect and boundless courage, Doc Stearn battles the monsters of the night. **Mr. Monster**

Beanish Creator of the fabulous Look • See • Show, this artist is the first bean to journey beyond The Beanworld into unexplored realms.

Beanish's mysterious special friend meets him inside a "secret sketch" every midday. **Dreamishness**

Masked Man A crimefighter with a heart of gold, Dick Carstairs is the detective behind the mask.

The Masked Man's sidekick is a reporter chronicling his best friend and hero's fight against the forces of organized crime. **Barney**

Ms. Tree Taking on her husband's detective firm when he was slain by mobsters, Ms. Tree continues to wreak rough justice.

Everyone not to be so afraid! Our Nippon hero is to be stopping those who would do bad yet once again! **Radio Boy**

Mo This California Girl, a fan of old movies and comic books, joins her sister Max Muldoon at Hollyhock High to study with their friends.

A little more on the wild side than her sister, this Muldoon loves dancing, dating, and her career as half the commercial-starring Twice-Nice twins. **Max**

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Heroes and Villains

They are drawn into the fray by the powerful schemes of the immortal Zzed, forced to choose sides in the growing war. Across vast time and space, from untold dimensions, the Azure Crosstime Express gathers those who can help.

Zzed's satellites, throwing the earth into the center of a universal eclipse, will soon wield enough power to finally bring the immortal to the brink of death—but Zzed's suicide will also destroy our universe.

The moment is at hand.

Only the ultimate sacrifice can stop Zzed's dream of final peace from becoming a reality. One of the mighty must die to save the universe. The strongest heroes and villains from many worlds prepare themselves for this final confrontation. And billions of lives hang in the balance.

Total Eclipse

It's Eclipse Comics' Tenth Anniversary. In this and future issues, you'll encounter Airboy, Valkyrie, Skywolf, Miracleman, The Prowler, Strike, the Heap, Aztec Ace and virtually every star from Eclipse's first decade of innovative comics publishing.

Marv Wolfman, writer, is the author of *The New Teen Titans, Crisis on Infinite Earths, Tomb of Dracula*, and countless other acclaimed comic books. The Zzed saga is his most intricate plot to date.

Bo Hampton, pencil artist, is well-known for his detailed linework and powerful layouts in books such as *Airboy, Lost Planet, Luger*, and *The New Mutants*. *Total Eclipse* is a new peak in his artistic development.

Rick Bryant, ink artist, has graced the pages of *Miracleman, Marvel Fanfare, Moon Knight*, and *World of Krypton*. Within *Total Eclipse*, he perfectly complements Hampton's detail with his own dynamic style.

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